

The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 14.02



It's Tuesday afternoon, another rushed editorial note is coming your way. Each letter as it forms into words aka babble coming hot off the press. We hope in the end, the note makes some sense to you few editorial note readers. We ask ourselves, why does the editor's note have to be this way? Why do we push ourselves to the final minutes each Tuesday? Well, we suppose we could write this note some quiet evening at home, or an early morning while sipping coffee, but then it wouldn't have the same effect as it does now, where we're staring down the clock, getting ready to do a final proof of this fabulous 14.02 issue, as we prepare for our night of workshops, or would it?

Setting the stage, this editorial note writer glances out the window admiring this gorgeous San Francisco day and then looks across The Beat office to see Manen, headphones on and music blaring, as he's seriously laying out this issue, knowing his deadline is creeping up on him. Then there is Samantha, updating the out of control mailing list. Thank goodness she is on it, otherwise, there would be no mailing of The Beat Within. Across from her is Allan Martinez, editing the Spanish pieces for issue 14.03 and across from him there's Michael keeping the San Francisco typing and edits in order for future upcoming issues. Around these few colleagues mentioned, are our fearless interns, quietly behind computers typing up workshop units and BWOs for future issues. As many of you know, The Beat Within is a relentless weekly. We complete this issue we move on to the next.

Here's a BWO update given that we bet there are many of you who have submitted BWOs to us in the past and have yet to see your work shine in these pages. Well, we send our apologies to you. But we are happy to announce that Omar is putting together a BWO special edition, which will be wall to wall BWOs from Beat household names to the not so known (yet) contributors. He is about halfway done with the project, and we hope to get it into your hands by early February. We are thrilled about this special BWO issue, given how powerful you BWO writers are, so thank you for your dear patience, and believing in our effort, which is to touch lives and allow not just our young people in juvenile hall to tell their stories, but to also allow you elders to say your piece too.

On a tragic note, as many of you have heard, out here in the Bay Area, particularly Oakland CA, the community is in protest on the killing of Oscar Grant, a young father, 22, who was shot in the back by a BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) police officer early New Year's Day at the Oakland BART Fruitvale Station's platform, as officers were investigating a fight onboard a BART train. The shooting was captured on film, and has been seen by hundreds of thousands on YouTube.

Also, many activist in the Bay Area community are protesting the current handling of this senseless killing. Just last night there was a protest in downtown San Francisco, and last week there was a protest in downtown Oakland, that turned to near rioting with the police, as cars and store fronts were damaged.

At this point, we do not think the officer who

shot Oscar Grant has been charged. We do know the officer resigned from his post as a BART police officer a week ago. We also know the family of Oscar Grant is asking for 25 million dollars from BART in a lawsuit. Such a tragedy, but not the only tragedy as many of you readers know. Each week we read of death from you contributors who have lost important people in your life due to violence, be it because one is in the wrong place at the wrong time, or due to living on the edge, a violent lifestyle. In the end, who pays, when one dies? Who mourns? Given what we know, all sides.

We've lost many Beat writers over the years to the gun, many resting in peace and others living the rest of their lives in cells. We feel the pain, and we are blessed to have this publication to share our hurt, our concern, our frustration.

The topics addressed in this issue leading up the writing were "To forgive" - How forgiving are you when your friends/homies let you down? We all have run into a conflict one time or another with our friends/homies, so this week we want to hear from you of a time when you felt betrayed/let down by a non-family member, but someone who you respect, or once respected. Tell us what happened. Tell us how you dealt with it, or are dealing with it today. Yes, we get angry, we resent an action or behavior. Yes, one makes mistakes and there can be misunderstandings, or a wrongdoings or an inappropriate actions that occurs, so let us know how you responded, or didn't respond. How did it affect your relationship? Now think back to that time of disappointment, and tell us how you handled it.

Our second topic, "Give it all up" - Of course you have your meetings with your PO, or you find yourself facing the judge at sentencing, and these two powerful individuals in your life are ordering you to make big-time changes if you want to stay out of the criminal justice system. Yet we all know how challenging that task truly is, and how few of us actually manage to make the ultimate change. With that said, what would it take to make you give up — or at least significantly change — your life as you know it, and face the unknown? What do you risk with such a change? What do you fear? What could you gain/lose by giving it all up, and starting afresh? Tell us readers.

Third topic, "Learning from the past" - More than 100 years ago, a Spanish poet named George Santayana wrote: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." What do you think meant?

Last but not least, "Sitting in my bedroom late last night..."

As many of you readers know, if these topics move you tonight as you read this editorial note, we encourage you to write and submit your work our way. We'd be honored to print your thoughts and stories in an upcoming issue of The Beat Within.

Thank you all for taking the time to read our editorial note. We know you'll dig this latest issue of truths, (for the most part).

This issue goes out to the family and friends of Oscar Grant and to the officer who sadly and tragically lost control and fired his gun the fateful night. Two families lives destroyed in a blinding second! We hope all find peace.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co-founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Omar Turcios

Graphics/Layout Editor: Manen Pau

Staff: Pauline Craig, Carolyn Goossen, Jill Wolfson, Allan Martinez, Patricia Johnson, Amanda Ables, Dennis Morton, Sheerly Avni, Hanif Bey, Brenda Navarro, Samantha Navarro, Johnny Le, Laura Vitaro, Karla Serrano, Allan Tinker, Nic Reiner-Parra, Laura Goode, Molly Patterson, Peggy Simmons, Kirstin Dan, Angel Ryono, Siliva Mortenson, Kolby Hanson, Sam Peterson, Kim Nelson, Gwendolyn Hubner, Oscar Peña Jr., Julia Scheinbeim, and Neela Banerjee.

The Maricopa County, Phoenix, Arizona, Juvenile Probation Department Beat Staff: Joe Szulecowski, M.A., Lisa Donsker, M.C., Hillary Shluker, M.C., Lisa Karczewski, M.A. The detention staff are: Carissa Allen, Antoinette Flores, Mr. B., Tammie Utter, D. Scott Herrmann, Connie Pyburn, Ph. D. Clinical Director, Ph.D. Clinical Director.

Bernalillio County Juvenile Detention & Youth Services Center Beat Staff: Steve Serna

Oak Hill - Washington, DC Staff: Alex Moe and Gabriel Prodder

Fresno : Mai Der Vang, Rosie Wentz, Liliana Romero, Nigel Medhurst, Ashleigh Rocker, and Cindy Jensen

Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Book Donor: Marisela Norte

Beat Supporters: The Beat Within gratefully acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs – California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Christensen Fund, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Morris Stulsaf Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, S. H. Cowell Foundation, Monterey, Fresno, Solano, Oak Hill - Washington DCSan Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Foundation, Shinryo-en Foundation, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Stone Circles Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, The California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/ Rembe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, the Zellerbach Family Fund and individual donors.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillio County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

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1. To Forgive

What's good Beat? I had a conflict in my life that wasn't easy to get over and I blamed someone else who was close to that person and it was hard for me to forgive.

I thought it was a set-up but it was just the streets. And at one point the streets got a hold of me and I ran wild through my neighbor in the city of Vallejo doing whatever and I'm tryna get over that situation but its hard. But I'm still working at it.

2. Give It All Up

What's rocking Beat? It young Koo again, I'm writing on this topic because I'm planning to change. Not change where I'm from but change the decisions I make.

Cause I realize life is about choices and most of my choices I made in life haven't been the right ones but now I think more so hopefully my choices get better.

-Markoo, Solano

From The Beat: Well it sounds like you've learned about the consequences of "doing whatever," and have to forgive yourself to move on. You can make better choices...it's good to think clearly before you act. It's a brave decision to "give it all up," but you've had courage for other things, so now use that courage for yourself, and your life.

Forgiving Isn't Easy

Forgiving somebody ain't easy as everybody think it is. It's easy to just say, "I forgive you," but that ain't really forgiving, ya feel me?

I had some shhh going with my boy in the outs, but I've learned to forgive, not by just saying, but from my heart. It was hard 'cause he did something that really got me mad. But I forgive him, not because of him, but for myself.

-Dk, San Francisco

From The Beat: We agree with you that forgiving is not easy, which is why we wish you would tell us more about how you managed to forgive your boy from your heart? Also, can you explain what you mean by forgiving not for him, but for yourself?

I'm Done Cutting

I would like to talk about cutting and how it started. It started at age 16. I went to the mental hospital in Ventura because I wanted to kill myself and I had a knife to my throat. I was going to slice myself but my dad stopped me and the police came. They sent me to the mental hospital and that's where I learned to cut.

There, a girl told me that whenever I'm depressed to get a razor or something sharp and that it'll take the pain away. I did that and started to do it more often and it turned into a habit because I did it not only when I was depressed but also when I got angry and also when I was bored. I wound up going to a group home because my family was scared of me. I look for anything to cut myself with. I now have scars that I have to live with forever and when I have children I am going to tell them the truth.

I really want to change and prove to my family that I can be better than that. I want to show them that I am not going to hurt myself anymore. Let me tell you something if you do cut, please don't. It doesn't really make things better. It just leaves you with scars and damages your body. If you cut yourself already, try and stop. You can stop. I just thought and still do think that I didn't belong in the world.

-Crazygurl, Fresno

From The Beat: You do belong in this world. We admire your courage and honesty. Many people cut and many of them have stopped and healed. Many people destroy themselves and act out in other ways either drinking, fighting, drugging. We have to stop but when we are in it it is hard to see our way out. You have a special gift to offer all people who are still cutting. They will see that they can stop cutting too.

To Forgive: Greed

I'm not too forgiving when it comes to people, period. Humans, people, or whatever you call us, myself included, have a way of destroying and never being satisfied with anything. People tend to abuse forgiveness and always take kindness for weakness. There seems to always be a want for more, need for more.

Why is it we/I can't be content with what it takes just to live? Even when some reach the point where they have so much money they couldn't spend it if they wanted to, they still rob others of THEIR needs, just to gain more unspendable money.

I can ramble on and on with this, but I'm going to leave The Beat with this: the key to life is: Why? Think about that. I mean really think about it.

-Nobody, San Francisco

From The Beat: Your quite self-effacing, for a philosopher of your caliber! Don't get us wrong: we love how you question yourself along with all of us about wanting to acquire more and more. But you are far from "rambling," and you are far from a Mr. Nobody! Why? Why, indeed! Tell us, from your point of view, would there be a difference if you were forgiving rather than unforgiving when it comes to our all-too-human flaws? (Would it affect your judgment to learn that our need to acquire more is genetically built-in, an ancient but surviving code to help the species survive? Not saying that it is, but if...)

Getting Tired

I don't know about the rest of the people writing in The Beat, but I'm getting tired of this YGC thang. Just being locked up period. What about you? Don't you get tired of being incarcerated?

I've been locked up almost six months. It might not seem like much, but it is. Being in here, you're just wasting your life. But while you're in here, you should do good and try to change your ways. You're just gonna keep coming back in here over and over. Someday you gotta get sick and tired of this life, the life of jail.

-C-rider, San Francisco

From The Beat: We couldn't have said it any better. When you truly get tired of coming here (and as you get deeper into the system, the "facilities" only get worse), you begin to make different choices that lead to different results. What new choices do you hope to make so that incarceration is not in your future?

Mistakes We Make

Pop one pop two halves, that's three,
now you sitting in juvenile hall and can't sleep,
young and left alone in this world.
Some have kids and bring them into a new era.
Like I said before momma on crack
daddy is too,
don't go to school.

Robbing 'cause they heart throbbing,
they mama couldn't feel them.

Used to loving being with her family,
now she can't see them.

They took her away because they felt she didn't need them.

Will they really feel like her mama couldn't teach her?

That's wrong, mama is too strong.

She was lost and afraid to change her ways.

Caught up with the game, all she feels is pain.

'Till this day she screams and hollers we all make mistakes...

one love The Beat.

-Kansha, Alameda

From The Beat: You've told a compelling story here, and you've written it in a really interesting way. You've got a talent for telling stories - keeping writing!

Will We Ever Change

Some of us say that we are
In a gang and never getting out.

Some of us say that we can't wait
To get out of the JJC and go smoke a blunt.

Some of us say that we hope the judge
Will give us a second chance, and that we will change no doubt.

Some of us say that when we get out
We are going straight to our girl's house.
But for many of use change is our biggest fear.

Guns, drugs, gangs, sex
That's what we have all been seeing for a long time.

We do what we want to at any moment
And when we feel weak we never show it.

We are growing up all different ways,
But all still wanting to be the badass.

One day we all want the OG to call us savage
But now that we are here do we really want that?

Some of us say that no we don't,
But others still want to flaunt it.

We wake up everyday with money on our minds,
Thinking of all the many ways that we can get more in less time.

People call us gangsters, rebels, thugs, and even pests.
It is funny how they judge themselves against the rest.

When they ask us if we will ever change
We say for who and for why?

So that we can look good in a world that is already screwed up?
Some of us thou, want the good life.

Some of us want to have a house, a bank account, some kids
and a wife.

So to some of us fellows that is doing wrong,
Keep doing what makes you happy if it's worth it when you're gone.

- GudTym, Fresno

From The Beat: This is probably the most honest piece we have heard in a while. You touched on everything that most of the people in the JJC deal with on a daily basis. Just remember that after you recognize a fear, the hard part is over, now all you have to do is to face it. But to face change you need a plan, and people who want to help. And most of all you need faith in yourself that you deserve more than you have now, and that you can earn it with respect and honor.

"Dedication To Tony (Lil' Chopstick)"

It's been a long trip, eight months a long time,
I met a cool person, low key wit' a strong mind,
Hope you keep yo' head up 'cause that's the best you can do,
I'm gone be free one day for sure you will too,
No more rap classes with the rappin' up in it,
No more playin' hoop wit' the hackin' up in it,
No more classroom talk no more game shows wins,
No more reality checks no more Beat Withins,
For real though man watch the people around you,
'Cause the people you think close ain't close
They a down you, while you sit in your cell think of a bright plan,
I know you got knowledge use your head to see the light man,
from one solid ninja to another,
You gon' beat yo' case, 'cause I believe in you my brother,
As long as I got yo' address you gonna receive my mail,
Just think about what I said and succeed not fail.
We all we got.

-Lil' Purp, Alameda

From The Beat: This farewell to Tony is full of heart and skill, your future success will depend on your will, read his biography and hear that it's true/the last three grafs could have been written for you.

My Wonderful Grandfather

He is no longer on earth. He past away one week ago and my grandmother past away five years ago. That is a common thing. That is crazy I'm locked up. They didn't let me go, 'cause they're sayin' I'm a flight risk. I haven't seen him in 11 months, almost one year. I saw him only one time when he first got sick. I went to go see him at Highland Hospital in Oakland.

I'm about to go to camp up the hill from the hall for six months. My grandfather hadn't even seen his great granddaughter. He didn't even know that his grandson had a lil' daughter. She will be three months tomorrow.

I got to get my life right so I can go home and be with my daughter. But, I cut off my E.M. then I was on the run 'cause I wanted to see my daughter.

My grandfather used to always have me with him when he went to sleep. I stayed with him for two years. I stopped staying with him because I wanted to be in the streets. Now I'm in jail doing time. If I would have stayed with him I would be out. But, I'm not tripping off the time. I'm tripping off my family. I stayed with him from 2004-2006. I used to play basketball. I stopped playing because the streets got into me and I was, like, forgetting him in the streets. I always went to school and got a 3.0. I don't know why I didn't stay in a good life.

Now I'm about to turn my life around after I do this time for these white folks. I got to step my game up so I can live my life. Why I say that is because my life is going down the wrong way. I got a little problem in my life like people are trying to kill me and my friends just because we stick together and some other shhh. I can't get into all the details. Where I'm from in Oakland there are problems in my hood because ninjas are mad and females are mad, 'cause my circle of ninjas is out here and we stick together. You dig?

I'm going to bounce back, though this time just telling myself to slow down and think right before I let my life go to waste. I'm too solid to let my life go to waste. When the judge said I was going to camp, I was like, "I've got to run from that place." That was all that was in my head.

Then I got on the phone and talked to my family. They were saying, "Don't do that, Spade. Stay there and get it over with."

All I was thinking was of my baby and my girl. Ain't going to even lie. I was like, "I got to get out for my b-day."

Then my girl was like, "Stay so you can come home for good, not the bad way, and you don't know when you will get caught up one day."

I still was saying, "I'm going to run from camp." Then it took me some time to look at it like, "I can knock this time out." That's what those white folks want a ninja to do. Run. So they can lock me up for two years. I was about to stay. I got my mind made up to do this program. It took some time to think I can't go the bad way. I can go the good way. You dig? I was, like, "the time I will be on the run, I would be almost done with my program."

I'll be going on home passes and seeing my baby, spending time with the family. I'll be in the house every home pass that they give me.

I'm getting older. I got to look at things the good way. Running is not going to get me nowhere but back in jail, then I'd be saying "I should of done that program." It's going to be good for me because I don't have no problems in jail.

- Young Spade, Alameda

From The Beat: It is wonderful how this piece shows how your grandfather is so fully in your life even though he is gone. You have learned well from your mistakes. Your grandfather would be proud. Stick to it. Your girl is right, do your time and then go home for good. Thank you so much for sharing your family and the mistakes you made so that we can all learn from them.

The Past And Repeating It

Another writing once again... So, what's up to all the homeboys? Damn, it sucks that all you get to read my piece this week.

Looking at the past, I remember it clearly, but I continue to repeat it. I don't learn from my mistakes, but I try not to get caught. A small percentage of people learn from them and never come back, but there's that other percentage that is in here reading my piece wishing they could've learned from their mistakes.

Repeat is a strong word. It basically means to do the same thing over and over again. I've done many things in my life that I wish I could change, but once again, I do it again and find myself trapped in a cell.

I've been here five times, and each time I tell myself that I'm not coming back. But that word "repeat" takes action once again. Mostly everyone in my unit is facing time since it's the max, and some won't get a chance to repeat their actions on the streets.

I believe this statement means that it's like even though you remember your memories, you continue to do the same thing. It is like gambling. You continue to lose money and you keep coming back for more. And you lose until you believe you will win. This is like us. We keep doing criminal activities hoping an opportunity would present itself as in money, and revenge,

Well, stay up to all the homies and try not to repeat what you've done and keep your head up.

-Chango, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We think you have accurately described why our habits can be bad for us, but we just keep doing them. In a way, that's the definition of habit. When habits continually produce bad consequences, then we call them addictions. By now, you've seen that trying "not to get caught" hasn't been a very successful strategy. To continue to use it is a sign of addiction, and like all addictions, it can be broken. Right now, it's controlling you; time to regain control so that you are making real choices, and not just reacting predictably.

Really Messed Up This Time

Well, I'm back again. This time I really messed up. I was just here! They gave me a chance to go back with my family - with my dying grandma who raised me. All she asked me to do was to stay sober. She's due to die soon.

What did I do when I got a blessing from the judge to go back with her and be there with her before she passes away? I went out and drank! I chose to go out and to live on the streets and drink whiskey with my man.

How long did I last? Two weeks before I got picked up for a warrant and for being drunk in public. Now I'm sitting in here regretting it so much. My man is gonna be gone back home in Riverside and my grandma's going to pass soon.

Well, the good news about everything is that I'm going back to my old rehab center. I think that's best for me because I know that I am a full-blown alcoholic. I'll have to do three months in rehab, then I'll be able to go back home. At least I'll get a chance to be sober and make my grandma happy before she dies.

I feel so guilty for what I've done, but I can't change the past. I can only change the future. I'm really motivated to do this, do good, and stay out of trouble.

To all the incarcerated: stay up! Do your program, and stay out. Stay away from alcohol. You don't want to end up being an alcoholic! Peace.

-Shay, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Thank you for this honest and difficult story Shay. History is on your side. Those who don't give up eventually succeed. We wish you good luck and peace. And peace to your grandmother.

Mother and Father, Why?

I'm 17 and I'm alone with no one but me to hold

My life is crushed

My heart is torn

My world is wandering around

My soul is taken by the dark angel

When I look to see you no one's around

But trees and buildings that cover the ground

What should I do when I don't see you

Should I leave where I was, or cry for you until you hear my cries?

Who am I when you're not around?

I'm a lost soul looking to be found

You both left me when I needed your help

What should I do?

Should I be buried alive?

Or covered with dirt to my feet

Who am I?

Am I a woman, a young forgiving soul?

Or am I a cruel unkind person looking to find love?

Who am I?

Am I the caring, sweet, and open person that every one can come to?

Or am I heartless

Because of the pain you both have caused for me

You're my mother and father

But you both left me and hurt me in ways people could never think

How could you hurt your own blood?

The person who looks like you more than anyone

But it's ok because you both have made me the woman I am today

The strong, caring, loving, sweet, honest, out going person

Because of you two I'm a better person that I could be

You're my mother and father even though you hurt me

I'm showing you I'm a better person

By forgiving you for everything we both have done

I hear your cries, it's so loud that I know how you feel

Even though mother you have died

Your cry is in my heart and plays every day like a movie film that is broken

The love you needed was right here

But you could see because of the pain that you caused me

I'm letting you know that your kids will know who you are

But only by me

And father o' father

You are my best friend

The other half of me

The only person I can talk to

Even though we had some problems

But what family doesn't?

I grew up without a mom

I had one thing a lot of people don't and that is a full time daddy

- Shawnta, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: This is a warm yet sorrowful piece. You only scratched the surface on how your parents hurt you. Would you care to share with us on how they hurt you? You state, "You both left me and hurt me in ways people could never think" but there is no indication as to why or how?

At least I'll get a chance to be sober and make my grandma happy before she dies.

Dear President Obama

I'm a 15 year old kid locked up in juvenile hall thinking of ways to help other kids in my situation. We still think like kids because we're still growing up.

The things that are wrong, we think are cool. You guys should stop trying us as adults just because we make mistakes. I learned from my mistake, and I bet other kids have too.

I don't think locking us up and separating us from our parents is right. It's just making us worse. We're supposed to be with our parents, but instead we're being sent away to a place where we're just going to get into more trouble. That's why when we come back home, we're still the same.

The only thing that's changed is our anger towards the police officers or the judge. They don't even know who we are. Just because a piece of paper says something doesn't mean that we're a bad type of person. I bet that if it were the judge's son in our place, it would be a different story. I bet he would feel very sad to see his son or daughter being sent away. It doesn't feel good seeing my parents and knowing that they can't take me home. Sincerely,

-Jonathan, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You've said a lot Jonathan. We hope the new president gets to read your piece. We're wondering about specific advice you might offer President Obama with regard to the juvenile justice system. What do you think you need to help you change the way you've been behaving?

Give It All Up

I think when people give something up, they get something in return. So say if gave up the bad, you will get something good in return. Or if you give up something good, you will get something bad in return.

So now let me tell you what I gave up good and bad and got something in return. Something bad I gave up was drinking. In return, I helped out my life.

When I gave up something good, it was my common sense, and what I got in return was my freedom taken away. Well, that's all I have to say. Late.

-The One An' Only Monkey, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Basically, you are describing the law of consequences. It's not hard to predict the likely consequences of various behaviors, including the consequences for giving up those behaviors. Everything we do, and everything we don't do, has consequences. Knowing that puts you ahead of the game...

Sorrow

Closer and closer The walls keep getting
Inside moving head to toe, but yet I'm still in this room
Waiting fa this door to open, to hear you are free
Lying down, the idea roams through my head
"If only I had control of my anger, and listen to her
I wouldn't be here"
Smallest thing I never cherished
Seem like the world now
It took this much
For me to realize
I hurt my most loved ones
Made them shed tears
Now I want a reset button

-Sindy, San Francisco

From The Beat: Too bad there's no reset button in life. But what we do have is a "play it forward" button that allows us to use the mistakes of the past to see a way to a better future. You named two things, your anger and listening to "her." Those are things you can work on. Knowing what to try to change is more than half the battle.

The Story Twists The Truth

First off, what's your side of the story? My side of the story is that I'm in here. What got me in here I can't say. But what I can say is that every story has a twist to it.

If you line up ten people and you tell someone from one end to another, you won't get the same story. It doesn't matter if it was only one word added. I'm talking when you get caught for a crime. The DA gathers enough information to question you. These informants told the DA a story about a serious crime. Next thing you know, your name comes out of their mouth.

They pull you in and you don't know what's going on. They question you about some serious incident that occurred, and they don't get nothing from you.

So now they begin to tell you part of the story they are certain of. Now you're sweating. They see it, so they pressure you. The story they told you is what you know. They aren't certain of the rest, so they make it up, and before you know realize it was improvised, the other DA tells you something else.

You forget about the added words. Then you choke boom! They get you. They come back with more information, and now you're isolated from the world because of the twisted story. Don't let it get twisted. The twisted version only comes from the person for telling it.

To all the homies locked down. one love, stay strong and keep your head up. One day your freedom will come.

-Saetern, Santa Clara

From The Beat: If your advice means that the story can only be twisted if you talk about it, then we think it's good advice. In fact, it's always a good idea to exercise your right to remain silent (until you talk to an attorney) if you can. We know the game you are describing ("Gossip"). The words always change along the way.

Respect Is The Key

Some people think that pride is all they have, and without it they have nothing. Young minds destroyed through poverty. But respect is the key. Less pride more respect.

With self-respect you have everything. And when you have everything, you get respect. Not material, but a heart. Which is what makes everything have life.

-Dumpa, San Francisco

From The Beat: Yes, poverty is a destructive disease! Have you always felt this way about pride, or did something open your eyes and mind? How have you discovered your self-respect?

Don't Fold

Sitting in my room last night made me think.
My life is like quicksand and it makes me sink.
I wonder to myself how I'm going to make it in life.
I really want to head for the good like my strife.
Like getting my diploma and graduating school.
If I really wanted to, I should have followed the rules.
If life could be like that for every young man.
Instead of being in the streets doing what he can.
I know God gave us life and that's a blessing.
But the future is like a mind game and it keeps me guessing.
So follow your footsteps on the right road.
Life is not a piece of paper and it shouldn't fold.

-James, Fresno

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing some very important words about life. Your poem reminds us that life is valuable and important, yet it also takes a realistic view by expressing that sometimes life can be a difficult road to walk with all of the challenges that get thrown our way. But your last line is powerful and uplifting. Your last line says it all.

Thinking

Sitting in my bedroom last night, I was thinking about the outs
 Sitting in my bedroom last night, I was thinking about the past
 Sitting in my bedroom last night, I was thinking about the present
 Sitting in my bedroom last night, I was thinking about the future
 Sitting in my bedroom last night, I was thinking about my days in here
 Sitting in my bedroom last night, I was thinking about the things I done
 Sitting in my bedroom last night, I was thinking about the things I want to change
 Sitting in my bedroom last night, I was thinking about the last day of my life.

-Stomper, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is what we're talking about, Stomper. This tells us that you don't just accept your life uncritically, that you think about the things that have led you here and the things that could lead you away from here. Thinking is the prerequisite for change, so don't stop thinking!

Give It All Up

What's poppin' with The Beat. This yo' boy, Yung J Newt. I wish I can give all this shhh up. Jail beef. Everything that bring negative energy towards me. It don't help you get nowhere but dead or in jail.

I wanna make my mama proud, show her I can be something in life — a pro football player or a construction worker or something. But I'm in a situation where it's no in and out the beef. You can't just hop out of it and start doing something good. It's always somebody you goin'a run into that you bump heads with when you was young, and it's goin' get hectic.

So I'm ready for whatever. I wish I can get out of it. But it's good. I'm go finish getting active and stay with till my casket drop, ya head me, lil' dawg.

-Sergeant Newt, San Francisco

From The Beat: Don't accept what you've heard until you explore every option for yourself. We know there are people who waited much longer than you, who were in much deeper than you, who found a way to get past it, so we know you can too. We're not saying that choice would be easy, but that you are faced with difficult choices, only. Which difficult choice you make will determine whether you make your mama proud or not — and all the excellent choices you wrote about are based on a good education. Finish school!

On The Corner

On the corner where everything goes down. On the corner where our black brothas go down. On the corner where drugs is found. On the corner where we make ourselves look like clowns.

On the corner is where all the corruption is at. On the corner where people get put on they back. On the corner where police brutality take place. On the corner where it's shame in our face. On the corner where you can catch a case. On the corner where you can get your life taken away.

On the corner where violent activities is held, where your face can get drained and turn pale. On the corner where people stand with no jobs so they go around and rob. On the corner where the white man want us to be, we fight, try and cry just let us be Free on the corner.

-Young Boobie, Alameda

From The Beat: This is an interesting meditation on this place and what it has to do with your life. In the end when you say you "cry just let us be Free" that the corner is a kind of prison also? Do you plan to go back there when you are released?

How I Feel Inside

Verse 1:

Well, on the streets I might be occupied
 I might dress, but you don't know how I feel inside
 You don't know half the feelings I had to hide
 You don't know half of the times I truly cried
 Or the times I could have died
 Or with my new lil' daddy to the end I'm gonna ride
 Or so many times, not to others, but to myself, I lied
 If I wanna hit a lick, "Yes," I replied
 How many times I got jumped and let it slide
 Or when I'm locked up, the rules I have to go by
 They don't believe me, but I said, "I'll try"
 What am I supposed to do, still ask why
 The only time I don't think 'bout it is when I'm high
 Me and ma sis is a tie
 Or when I could've died
 In a car accident
 Right now I know that's not the place I should've been
 I keep on thinking what would've happened if I would've f went
 Or which way was in me God would've sent
 I can't blame nobody but myself
 Yes, that's a hint
 I'm hurting so badly inside, it doesn't make sense

Chorus:

You might see me smile while that's a lot
 If I would've kept all the tears I cried
 It would've been a thousand of pots
 All this anger built up in me
 It never stops
 What would've happened if all this time
 I never got caught
 Would I be up in the spot
 Or, worse, popped?
 And still, 'til this day, I say I'm on top

Verse 2:

It's me times three
 I keep on telling the future I see
 Should I say sorry or should I make a plea?
 Should I go in the corner
 An' take out the beast within me?
 Or should I go around telling everybody who the real chief
 Or just crying, 'cause I'm hurting Prece
 I been here seven times
 Thank God I'm still gonna get released
 Would I have been in this predicament
 If my momma would've teach
 I ain't tryna go, I'm tryna go hard
 I'm tryna preach...
 Naw, really
 I'm tryna get to the goal
 I'm tryna reach

-Caprice, San Francisco

From The Beat: Without reaching, there can be no grasp/ Of life's great gifts as they come to pass/ Seven times locked is not to be proud of/ In a cage with girls — not one, but a crowd of/ But the past's just that, over and done/ What's important, is the direction you choose now to run.

I wanna make my mama proud, show her I can be something in life — a pro football player or a construction worker or something.

My Jefita

My jefita should be recognized for all the hard work she has done for me and my familia. She never had a job. My dad was away and she always did what she could to give me and my siblings what we needed.

She didn't just leave us at a shelter or starving. She took care of us even though she really couldn't. She did whatever it took to take care of us whether it was legal or illegal. No she never prostituted, if that's what came to any of your minds, but sold dope. She babysat and cleaned houses. And having four kids was hard for her to support.

For a long time she went through this struggling, when she could've just abandoned us, but she loved us and wouldn't do that.

She recently got into a community college and has graduated and is now working a good job as a doctor's assistant and is able to support us well and I'm glad that she has done so much for us and never let us go.

-Shorty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What a great story, one that we're sure you relate to, that your mother did what she had to do to survive but then figured out how to do it legit. Can you do the same?

Where Your Home At

Ninjas claim neighborhoods that they don't even own. Juvenile hall isn't a place called home.

Bullets flying everywhere, make me not safe

Trying to get through every single day!

Only could see my mom 45 minutes a day.

It's a pain in our heart but what can we say?

We put ourselves in this position and situation.

Promise, you won't see me in another police station.

My life is led by sports and violence

Living in a corrupted city, all I hear is sirens.

Raised in the projects; you'll be addicted to the streets

Smoking weed, selling rocks, trying to find a way to eat.

People ain't what they be talking about

Trying to beat my case but don't know how.

-Hunter, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you're successful in trying to beat your case, Hunter, but even if you don't, you have already set out a long-term goal that's worth much, much more. When you wrote, "Promise, you won't see me in another police station," you're laying down a path for yourself that leads away from places like this and towards school, family and work. Keep that promise, and all the rest will fall into place.

Thoughts Of a Thug

Sitting in my cell late last night

Looking out my window

A big fence in sight

Thought about my life and every crime

Now I reminiscing on doin' time

Thought about the murders and stolen gats

Thought about the poor old lady I attacked

Thought about the money and mota too.

Thought about my family and if they'd make it through

Thought about the drugs and all the lies

Thought about my mom and even heard her cries

Thought about my cousin after being deceased

But all those thoughts were gone after being released.

-Wedo, Land Of Enchantment, New Mexico

From The Beat: More often than not your words have hit the mark. Many if not all the people in lock up will say just about anything to get out of jail, but once they are released all that has been said and done is forgotten by then two simple words, "your released". When you're on the outs and your thinking about doing something against the law, think about what it was like sitting in that cell.

My Life (part 2)

Well, my life has been messed up most of my life, like now and today. I keep getting in trouble and locked up for shhh I didn't do and shhh I did do. Well, it's not easy being me, but most people say it is, but I don't think so.

Most of you people are not in jail or lived the life that I have. I've lost people I love, I've lost my soul, I've lost love, I've lost my inner self and most of all I've lost myself to the streets and gangs.

Well to me my only friends and family are my gang members. They're the people who care about me, love me show up when I need them and support me. Right now, I'm in here for something stupid and facing some time. It feels like a big dream and I can't wake up. It's because I've been running from my problems all my life and now it hit me hard and that's because I didn't play my cards right.

Now, I've got to do this time, but one thing is I'm doing the time and I'm not letting it do me. Every night before I go to bed I read my bible and pray to God to help me and give me strength to keep going. I keep my head up no matter what happens to me. What I tell myself is that I put myself in this and I've got to get myself out. I'm tired of blaming my family, my mom, and my loved ones for being in here. What I've learned so far is that the only one who can judge me is God and no one else.

I've got people who want me out so I need to keep my head up, do my time, and get out. I can't go back to my hood. It's not that they don't want me there it's because I don't want to get caught up any more and the streets ever did anything for me but get me locked up. All gangs get you pumped and for what, for you to be in prison for the rest of your life. I give up on gangs because every night I wonder if I'm going to see my kids have kids and their kids have kids. I'm done with this crazy life of mine. So I've got to do my time and not let it do me.

God bless you all.

-Young J, Alameda

From The Beat: We admire the courage you show in facing your self so squarely and taking responsibility for getting your life back. Though you have faced major challenges in your life you are willing to get your mind clear and work for what's most important to you. We see you listening to yourself, and think this must mean that the inner self you fear you lost is returning, giving you strength and reminding you of what you love. If you continue with this courage and strength we believe you can achieve your goals!

I'm Ready

Chea though, man, life is crazy, ain't it? That sometimes I even think the same, but I look at reality and ain't a thang change. People getting' out and comin' right back.

What's really goin' on with people? You ain't changed yo' thought process 'cause ya come back, and you did the same thing to get right back in here. That's called insanity, "Doing the same thing expectin' different results." Ha ha

I just sit back and wait for my time to shine, and that's comin' real soon. And what I mean by that is that release, where that nice sun can finally hit my face. I can finally breathe that good air, and get back to what's needed of me. 'Cause one thang for sure, instead of "doin' time," it's time to change, 'cause the streets don't love no one, not even its own momma if it had one. But chea, I'm gone off the other side of this building "home."

-Yf, San Francisco

From The Beat: The achievement is already there, in your thinking, in your attitude. You understand the life-giving importance of freedom! You understand that the streets are nothing more than streets, and that you do not need to spill anyone's blood, including your own, onto its uncaring, cold cement. Change can be intimidating, but also exciting and liberating. Let 2009 be a truly new year in every way!

From Vietnam to Oakland to Fighting a 187

What's up The Beat Within, it's me, Chopstick. Well I'm gonna write a biography today so you can get to know me better, so let's go ahead and get to the point.

I was born in December 20, 1990, and the knowledge I was told is that I was in a serious condition when I was born. Not that something was wrong with me, but it just that I cried so much and had a serious fever and almost faded away. See, I shed so many tears, even when I was born ...What a life.

Well I was born in Vietnam (Panang). Growing up over there wasn't easy at all because of my family's condition. If you were wealthy Vietnam then you be living like a king, but if you poor like my family, sometimes you don't even have food to eat.

My grandmother was a soldier. Also, she had 11 kids and have all of them happy and healthy, and as you know the Vietnam war was going on back then and so my grandma brought 10 of her kids accept my mom to America by boat.

The reason my mother got left behind is because she was the oldest kid, so she had to watch the property while my grandma, auntie and uncle found a better life. So you know my mother was struggling, trying to raise her five kids. I was the youngest.

Growing up I remember mom owin' a lot of people money and stuff. They would always come over our house and demand money. Me and my brother were the boys in the house, and seeing mom and my older three sisters fighting people just to push them of our house was an unbelievable image.

At that time, seeing my mother's eye swelling and crying, I wanted to grow up so fast and protect my mom, my siblings, and myself. I wanted to fight everybody for my mom. I hated the world at that time. I would sometimes go running around the house to go to a quiet place and promise to myself that I was going to be a big strong, rich man so I could repay my parents and have the power to embarrass people that were hurting my mom.

I was growing up around violence. Left to right, me and my brother had to dodge our parents' enemies so they wouldn't hurt us. So my heart went cold and my mind got sharp and smart. It got so big to the point that I don't even know how to use it. I would steal a lot, pick fruit from people's trees, steal other kids' toys, and steal clothes, all so my mom wouldn't have to buy me anything. I don't want her to buy me nothing because she doesn't have any money, and I understood that so I had to have it the way I wanted it.

This one time I was in a neighborhood (in Vietnam) and I saw a front door open. I went in there and tried to steal stuff and the owner came out of nowhere and was yelling. He caught me and brought me home and my parent started whooping my ass. I hated get whoopings because it hurt and it was useless.

I mean sometimes it worked, like keeping me from doing the same thing next time, but all that didn't mean nothing when pressure came along.

And as I grew up, when my parents hit me it didn't hurt anymore. And somehow I was suppose to be happy but I always feel sad because they were getting and that make me sad knowing that they didn't have the strength to even raise a broom or a stick to hit me no more... but I will get back to that in a little while.

Well even though I was greedy I was still an innocent kid and go to school, I was the smart kid. In Vietnam they don't have report cards. They grade by the scale of 1-10, and I stayed getting 9.8 or 10 when I was in elementary school. Then often I would be so smart in math that the teacher would be surprised.

Back to the family subject. We were doing whatever to have a good life. My mom wasn't wealthy but she would try

whatever to keep me happy and full of love (she is the greatest and most beautiful woman in my eyes).

It was around 1998, and I remember my mom telling me that we was going to America. I was around like 8 year old, I didn't know what America is so I was like whatever. As right now I kept thinking my mom was a real hustler. She was owing a lot of people money, left to right so it was impossible to leave the country to find a life we deserve. She put every dime in the project. It got to a point that she was broke on holidays and couldn't have a festival for my ancestors.

I still remember this one event that I am never going to forget. In Vietnam we have this day when we honor our ancestors and we put out delicious dish like rice, chicken, pork, and beef, and we light up candles and talk to them. So my mom didn't have money, so she only have one or two foods on the table. I was playing soccer and walking around the neighborhood, and I saw this money bill on the floor (it was a \$5 - American money).

I thought is was fake money to burn, so I picked it up and it looked so nice and smelled so good that I put it in my pocket and went home. As soon I got home I showed it to my big sister and her eyes got so big, they were filled with happiness and she gave it to my mom and she bought some nice and stuff and gave me a lil' bit money to go buy candy. I felt so good that I wanted to do that all the time.

Well it's you know I have three older sisters and one brother and I the youngest, my sister was around 26 or so when she have to leave our family to able to afford for the transfer to America, first to help out me and my family. My mom was the smartest person in the world, she calculates every step before she makes a move, and so she got my sister to America to get her education. My sister ended up getting married to a American Vietnamese citizen and become a citizen.

And in 2000 we came to America by a paper through my grandmother. We had to get shots and complete all the paper work and come to America. As you know, only teenagers that are under 21 come to America with their family. My second oldest sister couldn't go because she was 23 or something, and she got left behind - and she also had to watch the property that belonged to my parent. I was so sad and I cried so much, knowing I was finna leave my sister for a long time, she was like my mom ...very down to earth when it come to us... She be riding us to school on a bicycle during the rain and stuff, I loved her the most out of all the sisters, I love her so much.

I wanted to hide her in my suitcase and take her on the plane with me but it didn't work, my last tear dropped on the floor of Vietnam as I stepped on the plane to leave my innocent life behind.

I didn't know it was a whole different world this plane was taking me to. All the movies I seen about America was nothing compare to the real thing. As I say good bye Vietnam I said hello to America, my parent didn't come to America to look for money or try to be rich, all they wanted was for me and siblings to have good education and become someone that helped the community. Well when I got to America, I saw my sister (oldest). It had been so long I start kissing her and stuff, because I missed her so much.

And then from SF airport we came to Oakland, land of the black panther, land of gangsters, land of drugs, land of guns, land of everything.

And soon as I got there my mom signed me to go to school. I went to Bret Harte Middle School as a non-English speaker.

Sixth grade wasn't easy. I had kids teasing me because of my clothes and English. I was determined not to let people make fun of me no more, so I was saving money, and also asking my mom or sister to buy me clothes and stuff so I

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could fit in with other kid, well I had my first pair of brand new expensive shoes, is a high top air forces one (all white). I was in love with them, so from that moment on I got greedy and wanted more and more stuff.

I don't know, but when you have the money and the material stuff you got love from people. The ladies want you more and more, you are not going to feel left out, you are gonna feel loved, you're gonna get more friends.

So I continued to hustle for money to get me new stuff. However the more you get famous and popular the more people envy or hate you. In the eighth grade I remember these two guy in my after school program. I was just having fun play football. Out of nowhere, they wanted to mess with me, and think I was a sucker, so I told them they could see me anytime and anywhere. Even though they were surprise by how brave I was he didn't wanted to get embarrassed on front of people so we fought. This was the first fight I have that was for real. I was hanging with him, winning, and his other friends came in and jumped me, but I still didn't give in. I fought two of them the at same time, and I didn't even lose.

After the fight I called my brother to pick me up, and I said nothing. I even lied to him, but the brave and winning feeling took over my whole body and it made me a brand new person, I was no longer innocent.

The next day when I came to school, kids was spreading word. Like it was nothing, I went from a nobody to having lot of people know me and want to be my friend. I liked the feeling so I continued to apply the bad guy image to my head and go with the flow. And it seemed like people liked it and showed me a lil' bit more love.

I started to do a lot more bad stuff, so there was no more room for school. My grades went from 3.00 or above to like 1.03 or 2.00 (gpa). I often hid my report card when they mail it from school. I would tear it up and my parents wouldn't know. They didn't speak English so they didn't know how to get the information about me in school. My brother was too busy doing his own thing so he also didn't know a lot about it. So I continued to do bad. When I got to high school after I graduated middle school. I attended Skyline High School.

Wow, the first time I saw it was like a new world. It was so big compare to the middle school. I was happy and scared. I had to find new friends and I was all by myself trying to find a new way.

I was doing good in school. And then one day at school, one of my friends introduced me to cigarettes and weed. I didn't like the weed feeling. But I enjoyed the cigarette feeling it. It relaxed my mind and kept stress away from me. And then this day change my life. After school he said come and kick it with him, so I agreed.

I told my parents that I going to the gym playing basketball. so I went with him. Going around just chilling, smoking cigarettes and weed. He asked me do I want to come to the park.

You know I like girls, so hearing the work park I thought it just gone be hella fun so I went there. It was a nice place, it has gym, basketball courts and girls. But it also has Asian thugs, gangsters and drug dealers everywhere. It like a place that Asian kids to go when they get out of school or something. So I went there.

I liked the feeling, I felt accepted. So I went there to play basketball, then to start talking to different kids. I got introduced to drugs, guns and violence. Man this was some big time G to me, and OG's on top of that. And my brother been here before me so I felt like this was home. So I kept doing my thing and after that I got introduced to the drug game. I started out selling weed and selling eights, and then I moved up to quarters and a zips. And believe me, I didn't need the money, my family was doing good.

I just did it just because it was the thing to do and got

me clothes and living good without asking my parents for stuff. And I was making a lot -- not a lot to adults but a lot to me. Then this was when pills was moving good. A lot of OG's was getting major money, so I decided to jump in the thizz game. I start out with 10 pills I get it for not even half of the price that I made, so I was eating for a 15 year old. I started moving up to 50 to 100 pills. It was all good then, until I got jacked for my pills in school. I came back to school with homeboy to demand it back, I got it back and we used violence to get it back. I also got snitched on by the guy. They snitchws on me so I got kicked out of school for drug possession and assault (what a coward, ha?).

Then I went to the school district to see the board and see if I could go back to school. They said they didn't have any evidence to convict me, so I got back to school with no charges and nothing. Then I went back to doing the same thing. I wanted to quit and do good in school, but the money was too good, and the attention from girls, so I did the same thing.

I was being watched 24/7 when I wasn't in school, not only from the principal but also the police. It got to the point when I got harass for the little thing like all of the minor stuff. Well my family still didn't know what was going on, in their eyes I was still the same lil' boy they loved.

So it kept on going, and the more I get bigger the more violent I got. I wanted to explode. I went around and did a lot of bad and made a lot of excuses so I would stay with my girlfriend and homeboy. I would run the streets all night, sleep in class in the morning. Then too one day when I caught my first case, assault with a deadly weapon I got caught. I wasn't even scare but I feel so bad seeing my mama cry and brother worry.

I promised them I would do good, but deep down in my heart. I know the temptation gon' get me in bad place. Soon as they release me to my parent custody (because it was my first time), I stayed home for like the whole month. I went back to school, did good for lil' while and was back doing the same stuff. One day I sat back and talked to myself, listening to Tupac (my favorite rapper ever) and his words sank in, and it made me realize that it ain't no future for me if I keep being like this. A lot of my homeboys was dying and OGs getting locked away.

But as soon as that night was over. I came back to reality man. I got arrested for a 187 case. God, my mom dropped down her knees crying... man my heart got stabbed that moment. Ain't nothing never hurt me more than this. It felt like 100 dudes beating me with bats. I wasn't even crying.

Man, now I am fighting this case with no hope for the future. I always ask myself a lot of questions but the one I always ask is who am I? I am searching for the real me. I know my story can be related to a lot of people my age or even younger. All I am saying is do what's right. Homies and stuff ain't nothing compared to your real family.

I hope you guys search for the real you before you want to be like someone that is completely opposite from you. Please don't follow my footsteps jail is not for you guy. Before I go I wish you find the right path and good choice of your life and become whoever you want to be. I know you can do it, if Obama can do it everyone can. And ask yourself who are you. My name is Lil Chopstick, it's was nice to share my story with you.

Much love.

-Lil' Chopstick, Alameda

From The Beat: What can we say, Tony. All the skills, storytelling ability, love, pain, hard lessons and wisdom you have gained over your year in Juvenile Hall shines in the story you shared with us all here. Your departure leaves a big hole in the unit, and it will leave a big hole in The Beat too, as we wait for your first installment for The Beat Without. Wherever you go, whatever happens to you, we know that you will be inspiring others, sharing your spirit, and helping other people get through their suffering. Continue to learn and teach, Tony, we know you can!

A Young Boy's Struggle

What's up The Beat, I'm back once again mad, stressing but them streets will eat you and break you.

Man, coming straight from Oakland ain't no joke. Man, so many youngstas out here goin' around killing and robbing each other. Man, it seem like that's all we know, getting on, smoking purple, drinking, seems like the only way out. But it ain't.

I feel we all can make it out the hood, you feel me? But we gotta stay strong, determined and positive. But how can some of my youngstas be positive when they're mama on crack, daddy is too and didn't go to school? Who can they run to? Granny gambling, grandpa drunk, the only friend he got is his pump. He think popping pills and drinking is fun.

Next time you thinking he a punk, he thought the only thing that can help was that pump. Now 'cause nobody was there but his thang, now he gotta do twenty-five to life, full of pain.

-Kanisha, Alameda

From The Beat: Kanisha, there is this song called "Brenda's Got a Baby" by Tupac Shakur and one of the lines says "...just 'cause you're in the ghetto doesn't mean you can't grow..." This line is true for many people. You have to work hard and fight if you want to grow. We know that this piece you have written will reach many kids in need. We just have to see if they hear you.

Attitude

Greetings to all. Tonight, I am going to write about attitude. The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on my life. Attitude to me is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than success, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a person, a neighborhood, a company or a school.

The remarkable thing is we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past; we cannot change the fact that people will act in a specific way. We cannot change what we can't see. The only thing we can do is play on the string we have, and that is attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it.

-Chucko, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This was a very wise and thoughtful piece. Realizing that life is impacted by your attitude just shows that you are growing as a person. It seems like you have learned a great deal. How will you make sure your reactions don't get you locked up? It takes many experiences (good and bad) and many years for someone to realize what you know now. Apply your knowledge for the better.

Mom, Heavens Above

Look up at the heavens
And watch the clouds
And maybe some other day you'll become proud.
You live a life and a life gets taken
Because some people just talk I call it high power fakin'
My mom is a great woman, now she gone out of my life,
Not because of old age, but because of that pipe.
It ain't never been right going through that pain
Now I got a bad life and I don't feel the same
I haven't seen my mom ever since I was little
And now I never will it's like I got to solve this riddle
It's a shame she had to go
I miss her so much
I watch the heavens go by and I squeeze with much such
I love her, I love her, I love her so much
I wish she come back, my life will change
I then damaged my career
I messed up my brain
My mom will soon come back 'cause the heaven's got her back.

-Lil' Black, Alameda

From The Beat: The pain you have been through is real - and we hurt for you and every other family that has been battered by drug addiction, but you have the courage, the intelligence, and the spirit to get through this challenge. Just reread your own writing - see how much strength there is in each line you write.

Gun Violence

A gun is a gun is a gun.

Guns were made for one reason and that is violence. So talking about gun violence like it's a shocking dilemma

has always surprised me.

Where is the irony in guns leading to violence?

Where is the surprise in that?

People can have guns to feel protected and safe.

That is logical but how can we tell if that is always the reason? How can we be sure

that people won't use guns in inappropriate ways?

We can't.

Guns are too much of a risk.

Results are permanent.

We can't afford putting a gun in the hands of the wrong person

-but we do and now everyone complains about it.

Everyone tries to figure out how gun violence can be fixed,

but it can't. Now everyone wants a gun

to protect themselves from other guns.

I could use one.

I would feel better if I knew

my kids knew how to handle guns and eventually invested in one. You can't take guns back from society.

You can't reverse gun violence.

You can't give someone a gun and expect peace.

The same way you can't give a child candy bars

and expect a healthy diet or no cavities.

-Eileen, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a very true view of the history of guns and where guns stand in society today. The thing is, people are still surprised by gun violence because no matter how many times it happens, murder is always surprising. What do you think is a reasonable solution to end gun violence? Excellent commentary!

Dreams

What's up wit it Beat? I aint gonna rap today. But I'm a talk about dreams. Here's a little poem.

Some dreams are fake and some dreams are true.

Some people don't believe in dreams so let me tell you

When I have dreams, some be happening in reall life

like when I got shot at buy a gun or stabbed by a knife

Maybe I have bad dreams because I think negative thoughts

about doin' everything I could before my life stops

I hate having bad dreams I wish they would be good

but maybe it's all catching up to me for all the dirt I did in the hood

Maybe it's a sign to get my life straight

cause in my room I don't do nothin' but think night and day

I gotta change and stop to the next level

cause I know who's try'n to get me and it's the devil

but I can't because I belong to the lord

and I just answered my question on why I be having bad dreams for

The reason I'm having bad dreams: one is because I think negative thoughts a lot and I also let the devil get to me

for too long, but as of right now I'm walking in the light with the lord.

-Lil' Rolo, Alameda

From The Beat: You're doing some good thinking. We agree positive thoughts are full of light and life, and negative thoughts fight against that light and life. Negative thinking can be a habit and it takes awareness to change, but it's certainly possible. You have to teach your mind new ways...eject the old patterns like a bad cd.

Straight Up

Straight up
 My life ain't right
 I got a little sister that watched me come in at night
 Straight up
 I ain't no gangsta' just trying to get by at night
 Straight up
 The judge don't even believe what I say
 Straight up
 The judge detained me yeah I was feeling stuffed
 Straight up
 I'm not just hurting me I'm hurting little sis'
 Man that's just straight up
 Straight up every time I get on the phone
 I feel all-alone can't even moan and groan.

-Darrell, Alameda

From The Beat: Your little sister might look up to you and think the things you're doing are cool. Sounds like this bothers you though, so right now is a good time to change your ways before your little sister does something you both regret. Be her big brother and show her the right path. Remember she looks up to you and she will listen to you, straight up.

That Magnum

'Till this day I remember the first time I held a gun. A real gun. It was a .45 magnum, the older ones, a revolver. It was heavy and cold. I liked the feeling of having a real gun in my hand, a real gun with real bullets that could put a real hole in a real person.

Guns have always been available for my use, various kinds of guns. Big ones, small ones, weak ones, strong ones, new ones and dirty ones, nine millimeters with an extended clip, twelve gauge shotguns, sniper rifles, and the list goes on.

When I was younger I loved to pack guns, I especially liked to carry the 12-gauge in my pants, liking the way the barrel tapped the side of my knee after every step I took. But now that I'm older and more knowledgeable about quetes (guns) and the consequences they come with, like gun enhancements, I choose to roam these dangerous streets without a pistol or shotgun, even though there can be deadly consequences for not packing. I know I'm making a good choice. Although I will carry a knife.

Well Beat That's all for today, and for all doing time behind these walls or on the streets keep your chin held up high and be safe, until pen meets paper again, alrato

-Flaco, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, you have enormous strength to not follow the crowd and instead choose against holding a gun. It takes a big person to choose against the norm because we know how hard it is when peer pressure is all around you. What do you think can be done to make the streets safe enough to not even have to carry a knife?

Jeremiah

Me and my girl have come up with the name and it is Jeremiah. It took us 7 months to come up with a name. At first I didn't want it because I thought it was girly but then after a while I started to like it. I'm very happy we came up with a good name.

Now all I'm waitin' on is his birth and it is in February. I'm excited, happy, and very nervous because I never had this experience before but I know I'm ready, I've been wantin' 'a child for a while now and now the lord has blessed me. "Thank you God." I'm very thankful. I love you my lord my family my son. See you soon

-Elton, Alameda

From The Beat: Jeremiah, what a beautiful name! And congratulations on starting off so well in fatherhood - meaning the way you co-operated with your girl, mother and father together choosing the name for him... you will love him and raise him together no matter what.

Give It All Up

The judge sent me to this correction facility because I didn't want to change. I was hard-headed. When I came in here I just gave up and was even more hard headed.

But I found out my girlfriend was pregnant and now I want to change and I have to change not for me but for my child. The risk is that if I don't change my baby won't have a good life.

If my baby don't have a good life I'm scared it's going to end up like me. So now I have to give up my life of crime and start fresh for my child.

-Kevin, Alameda

From The Beat: Congratulations on your child. Your right this is like a wake up call to change. If you continue to live the way you do your child's life will be affected by your lifestyle. In order to get that change for your child you yourself have to change and want to change. Good luck with fatherhood.

Ready To Change

I'm ready to change
 I'm ready to do the right thing
 I sit in my bed late at night
 Asking myself, "Why did I do this?
 Why did I put myself in this situation?
 What was I thinkin'?"
 See, I wasn't thinkin'
 'Cause if I was thinkin'
 I wouldn't did that
 I been here for four months now
 And I'm ready to go home, somewhere
 I just wanna leave this place

-Dri Dri, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't blame you for wanting to leave this place. When you think back to that time you weren't thinking, were there other people with you? Was there peer pressure to do what you did? That's something to be careful about, because you can have the best intentions in the world, but if you find it hard just to say, "No," then you may end up doing something stupid again. Keep thinking about what you want in life, and how "slow and steady" wins the race.

Lurking Against Life

You might understand life, but do it understand you?
 Going to jail and robbing people, that's what you got to do?

Sneak around in the night on a hot August night
 Tryin' to rob a little mo'
 Or just tryin' to pick a fight
 But that's just life, not Christ
 Because Christ will do right
 He'll put an end to this world with one single strike
 Have you ever taught yo' lil' brother how to ride a bike?
 I don't think that you have 'cause you on the street lookin' mad

Next thing you know, you gone and yo' brother is sad.
 Never hold against your will, the strong will give you chills

Or you'll be the next person on the streets askin' for them bills

You could be who you want
 But don't take it to war
 Just be a famous ballplayer
 Shoot the hoop then you score
 It ain't over for me

just a regular life play games all you want because
 You lurkin' against life

-Lil' Quan, Alameda

From The Beat: Another powerful poem, Lil Quan, just bursting with talent and images that hit us right in the heart. It's like you see all the little moments that make life worth living, and you also see how many people throw those moments away and miss them. Keep puttin' it down, for The Beat and for yourself, because your voice needs to be heard!

No Moment To Rest

Life through my blood shot eyes would scare a square to death.
 Poverty, murder, violence and never a moment to rest.
 You lost everything and found out nothing was left.
 I was a devil child born in 1991.
 Ever since I got locked up, everything was done.
 After a while, this comes to no fun.
 From now on my mind is set to do right.
 And if I follow it my days will be bright.
 But it doesn't matter if you bang red or blue.
 If you thank the man above, then God will bless you.
 So now I'm sitting in this weird place.
 I'm about to meet the judge with tears on my face.
 Thinking about how much time I'm gonna do.
 See what happens when you run the streets with them dumb fools.
 You thought it was right but that crap ain't cool.
 Now I'm going to put this to an end.
 I hope this never comes back to me again.

-James, Fresno

From The Beat: Very nice! You've really got a knack for expressing yourself through words, and we can feel your deep emotions coming out. You describe life as a stressful day-to-day battle, with no time to rest. We really hope in time you do get an opportunity to relax and reflect on everything you've been through and where you want to go in the future.

My Mind Is Filled

I wasted opportunities 'cause I show no pity
 .
 life is gritty. I feel pissy. My mind runs like a committee.
 I have thoughts that rot inside my mind.
 I need to unwind, remind, self-define myself.
 They restrain him, drain him from positive ways.
 I see in a faze 'cause it's in a maze...
 They want me to go in a negative way, 'cause I chose
 this life.
 I say it's just a matter of days 'til I meet my fate.
 I belong to the state.
 Makes me contemplate.
 But this is my trait.
 What I write is very real.
 My heart and mind are made of steel.
 My body's like a mill. I want to give up.
 That's for real.

-Ernesto, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You may want to give up, sometimes, but don't. You're a mighty fine writer. We've watched your writing evolve from angry rants to thoughtful poems in a very short time. We're struck by the line - "My mind runs like a committee." That's a line that any poet would be proud to have written.

My Life In The Forest

I like to live in the forest. I like all my friends there, like I have a bear as a friend. I like to eat bananas and run around in my underwear when I'm in the forest. I also like to sing songs with my bear. My favorite song is "Bear Necessities." He is my best friend and they took him away from me when they put me in here. I miss him a lot. I hope I get out soon, so I can go back to my life in the forest. I also built my house out of hay, but they blew it down and I have to rebuild it.

-Edwin, Marin

From The Beat: Apparently, you left the forest long enough to come in contact with the law of the city instead of the law of the jungle! If you want to be reunited with your bear, and run around in the forest bare, then you're going to have to make some changes. What are the chances of that? (Use your imagination; you've got a great one!)

No Justice

The week before Thanksgiving the judge put me in Juvenile Hall. Before that happened, I had a terrible addiction to drugs. No matter how many times they put me in here I always turn back to the drugs to cure the pain.

Well during that week I realized that drugs ain't worth living in. I made the decision to quit and for the last month I have quit using. It was very hard and still is. I couldn't handle dealing with reality so I took off to my friends house for two days and then went home. I did stay drug-free but I got a violation of probation for not residing in my home.

So here I am again in the awful place. I am awaiting court in about a month. They want me to put me in a six-month In-Patient Drug Program. I just don't understand why I have to be in a drug program now that I finally quit. I quit so I don't have to go into this program and I might have to anyways. Where's the justice in that?

-Kristina, Fresno

From The Beat: An addict is an addicted even when they are no longer using their drug. Just because you quit, doesn't mean the feelings and ways of thinking that drove you to use have disappeared. The addict will do anything to get the \$\$ to get their drug. Any justice the addict had was sacrificed when they became addicted. Go to the Rehab and work on yourself. Get out of the slavery of addiction.

Forgive, But Not Forget

Its always good to forgive not for the person, but for yourself. Forgive is not forgetting about what that person did or said.

What I did is forgive the person for what he did, but I can't forget it. It's good not to forget it because you'll be able not to make the mistake again.

-Tyler, Solano

From The Beat: It's good to remember useful information, it's just the stuff that pulls on you, that twists your gut, or makes you trip needlessly on the past...You don't have to hang onto facts you learn, you just know them when you need them.

Gun Hazards

To me, guns are dangerous.

Guns are used for positive and negative reasons.

Some positive reasons why guns are used are for safety.

A negative reason is for violence.

Violence is the whole reason guns are used.

I've seen my grandmother with a gun and she shot a bullet on to the ground in her house. But lucky no one got hurt.

My dad also tried to stop her.

Guns are used in gangs.

A lot of people have been killed in gangs by guns.

If my oldest sister gets killed by a different group of gangs,

it's her fault for being in a gang.

Guns are used at no specific time or date.

Most people die from getting shot.

Once people are dead, they're always dead and no one can bring the back.

Guns (and other weapons) are a danger to the world.

Guns (and other weapons) should be used for emergencies, not for violence.

-Jose, Fresno

From The Beat: Jose, thanks for bringing the hazards of gun violence to light. You've seen the impact of guns in your own family, and in gangs. It's very sad to think about how many people have died from guns, whether it was intentional or by accident. We're sorry to hear your sister is in a tough situation right now. Do you think it's her fault completely? If she wanted to break away from the gang life, what do you think she can do?

You Better Recognize My Uncle

I want to send a shout out to my uncle because he really needs to get recognized. I used to go to his house all the time to get drunk and high. I used to bring weed and he used to get the drink.

My cousins and uncles used to go over every Friday night and just have a good time. But all of a sudden he started going to church and stopped smoking and drinking.

I found out that not too long ago a kid, like 17 years old, ended up having nowhere to live because his mom had died because she was really sick. So he let the 17 year old move into his house and treated him like family. So I just thought that it should be recognized, so stay up uncle and keep doing what your doing.

-Moses, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Your uncle sounds like a great guy. Sometimes adults who give young people a safe place are the most important people in our communities.

Giving it All Up

In order for me to stay out of here there's a lot of things I need to give up. I keep telling myself that when I get out, I'm going to do better but in the back of my mind, I'm not sure I can. When I get out I have to completely change myself around all the way and I'm so scared that I'm not going to make it.

"Hoeing" is my lifestyle at this moment and it's not easy to change your whole life around in a split second. It's very addicting and I'm not completely sure I want to give that up yet. To be honest I really don't want to stop at all but I know I need to for God, my family and for my life that is ahead of me. The only thing I'm giving up is the money. I don't think I can stop completely but I know I need to for now.

All I want to do is finish high school and do maybe a couple years of college. I want to start "hoeing" when I'm at least 18 with high school out of the way so when I'm ready to stop for good, I have something to fall back on instead of depending on some fake-ass Fresno, wanna-be pimp who don't know shhh about the game! I'm not ready to give it all up for good but I know it's the thing I have to do for now, in order to stay out of this place.

-Jewels, Fresno

From The Beat: We admire your honesty and the way you tell us what you are thinking. We don't really hear any plan to stop "hoeing" however. You say you are going to quit so you can stay out of JJC but then you say you are not going to quit. If you find yourself returning to JJC then you have to accept the facts that exist. We think your idea of getting a high school degree is a good one. With an education you could get a job that pays much better than hoeing and there is little or no chance of being arrested.

Thank God... And My Lawyer

What's up Beat? Man, it's ya boy KB once again. What's going on with me? Shhh, I am finally done with going to court. I got four months life skill even though I should have went to YA and had a strike. My lawyer really did me right in the courtroom and got me that good life skill with no strike. Thank god for that.

When I get out, I plan to get done with school and getting back in the sports. Hopefully all my plans go as planned. And for all ma peoples in this Beat shhh, good luck to you and keep ya heads up. I'm gone.

-The Real Beast, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's very nice to read a piece acknowledging that your lawyer did a good job on your behalf. Now, it's up to you to follow through on your promise to finish school so that the second chance your lawyer got for you will not be wasted. Good luck.

To Forgive

The hardest thing I ever did was forgive my old friend, now we was best friends 'till the very end.

I taught this girl everything,

shared my home

just to find out she been giving my man dome.

Now I let that shhh slide

not trying to lose a friend

'cause we was supposed to be tight to the very end,

she denied it all, so I let that shhh fall.

Taught her to hit the pipe, snort the lines

just so we could keep those desired highs.

After I broke it off with my man,

she gonna ask if she can have a turn, God damn!

I said I didn't care, really I didn't

but he couldn't help but stare.

So when they broke up

he tried to go back with me

crawling on his knees.

She found out and started running her mouth,

she said every little secret and more

so our friendship went out the door.

Now I could spread what I knew,

but then her life would be through,

'cause all the shhh she did ai'nt cool,

but I'll keep my loyalty and remain known

as a good friend and I'll keep them secrets 'till the very end.

-Jordyn, Alameda

From The Beat: Sounds like that friendship really fell apart. Holding on to your integrity, keeping her stuff secret, that really says a lot about who you are. Anyone would be lucky to have someone like you as a friend.

One Life

(Chorus)

One life then I'm gone and I don't know where I'ma go cause I aint never been dead before, steady thugging in the streets getting dirty every minute but the shhh get old shhh get old (2x)

(Verse 1)

Hush ya mouth you aint doing what you talking bout

going off at the lip a get you aired out

Should of stayed in school and made ya momma proud

chose to run with them punks got ya messed now

Get the money leave them suckas in the background

cause when you stuck in the ocean they gone let you drown

You only got one life and I aint afraid...

shook hands with the devil made a hot deal

So I keep the hood blazing like it's on the grill

every time I wake up I'm back in jail

But every time I touchdown it's on the land of paper

so when you see the sun shining think of me hater

In the streets it get cold then even colder plucking out

them fake ninjas from them real soldiers

Grew up with fake ninjas now I'm throwing cold shoulders

hopefully they won't get sick catch ammonia

I can fail a million times then stand up on ya

it aint about who winning it's living longer

All the money in the world couldn't stop death

so if ya want ya life better watch ya next step

(Chorus 2x)

-Shawny D, Solano

From The Beat: This is good writing and it's clear from your piece that the life you've been living isn't satisfying, so maybe you have some choices. You're right we only have one life, and all the money in the world won't stop death. You know what's up, what are you going to do with that knowledge?

The One Person I Recognize

Hey Beat, the one person that I want to recognize is my baby's mom because she does things for me that no one else would. She makes me feel right through this hell. She brings the biggest smile to my face and makes me feel like no other person in the world can. She makes me feel there's no other for her and she tells me the same.

I also recognize how much effort she put into our relationship and how good she makes it and how she touched me in so many ways that my feelings for her grew strong and that I also touched her heart and now our relationship is stronger than ever, but one thing that she brought in the world that impacted me so much was my son and now I have changed my life around and I'm doing good for her and my son that she brought into the world and I won't ever forget it, but I also know she will always be here for me to help me support me in whatever way she can.

I need help in here and she's the only one to seem to help me, her and my son, that's why when I go home I'm giving them the world, but it's so hard without them.

I have nobody in this place, so at times I can't wait for The Beat Within, because this one person also brings the biggest smile on my face and I can also explain and let her know how I feel and I know she also understands my pain at times. I feel like she sees right through me, so that's who I wanted to recognize and that's The Beat and my baby's momma son.

-Drifter, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thanks Drifter. Your words inspire us and your dedication to your girl and baby is clear. Keep your head up and keep writing.

Taking Advantage Of An Opportunity

What's poppin' in the halls? I'm still in here goin' on 11 months. I'm waitin' on an interview from a grouper in Arizona. It's new, and the program is like Glen Mills. If I get this chance, I'm goin' take advantage on this and learn a trade and finish high school. I'ma be on some smooth shih.

Me and my busty baby goin' to do it big. As long as she be on some cool shhh, and stop listening to bs and gossip, we goin' be smooth. But anyways, I'm over here holdin' it down, doin'. my thang, tryin' stay out of trouble. Keep my head above water.

-D Boy, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you get into the program, and that you find many opportunities there to take advantage of, so that when you touch down, you are better prepared and stronger to deal with life. If "attitude determines altitude," then you should be able to rise above your current circumstances and fly!

Packing Heat

I grew up with guns all around getting set off, blasting fools to the ground.
 I've lost so many family and friends,
 so many lives brought to a quick end.
 You gotta pack heat so you don't reach defeat,
 guns will never go away
 so I suggest you sit up at night and pray
 'cause all it takes is to aim, pull the trigger and deliver.
 But suddenly you realize you was the one hit,
 now you lay on the ground and watch the blood drip
 you finally have been beat.
 Maybe you should've been packing heat.

-Jacqueline, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a powerful poem of the realization of gun violence, Jacqueline. What does this mean to you?

Forgiving

Well, I forgive because what I've done people shouldn't forgive me. But they do and that's why I forgive because I know that my heart can if other people can.

Like for instance, my friends are talking shhh about some incident that happened, and they putting a bad report for me with without even knowing what happened. I feel betrayed because I didn't have it expected from this person. But I'll forgive him when he comes out and finds out the truth because my friendship ain't gonna get messed up over this. I'm going to forgive, and not let this get the best of me. So it's coo'. Do what you do.

-Flea, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Forgiving is never easy, so we admire you for understanding what it means to forgive. We're especially impressed that you want to forgive because others have forgiven you. In the famous Lord's Prayer, there is a line that goes, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." It sounds like you have followed this prayer.

Is It Me Or The Beast Within Me?

I guess, yes,
 I'm back! What a mess.
 Did I leave for too long?
 Did y'all miss me at the nest?
 My talent I have, I can say I'm blessed
 And would I ever stop rapping? I think about it less
 It's nothing... just everything I experience, I express
 When are they gonna send me back to my address?
 Or leave me locked in a cage full of stress
 I don't need nobody to tell me I'm the best
 Momma always told me to go hard on the rest
 I can be nice, but just don't test
 How in the hell I got myself in this mess?
 Can't blame nobody but myself for my 7th arrest
 Well, I'm gone for now, but wish me luck for the next

-Caprice, San Francisco

From The Beat: You don't need luck, you need a plan/ Stay positive, like Barack says, "Yes, we can!" Look at those 7 arrests and be honest about where you went wrong/ 'Cause the consequences get worse if you keep doing the same thing for long/ You express yourself well, there's no doubt about it/ But when you're free, you don't have to whisper, you can shout it!

A Better Way To Be Heard

All the people in here
 Are all the same
 They bump their gums
 But with nothing to really say
 They try so hard to get you mad
 They play their games to make you sad
 But they talk their mess because they're hurt
 They try so hard to be heard
 They cry at night
 But strong by day
 They're all the same
 With really nothing to say
 So I laugh in my room because I see their hurt
 They play their games only to be heard
 So I sit here with nothing to say
 Because I'm not going to be apart of their little kid games
 They can talk their mess
 To feel good but it's not going to hurt me
 Because I found a better way to be heard

- Shawnta, Land Of Enchantment, New Mexico

From The Beat: These sound like the words from someone who is maturing. And what better way to be heard? Never stop sharing your voice in a positive way.

Never Again

I remember the night I punched my moms. It was Christmas eve of last year. We were on our way to the drive-in and I didn't want to go, but it was a family thing and I had to. So when I got in the car I had a real bad attitude and it was something she didn't like at all. I was back talking and being real rude.

Now, I don't know why I was trying to act like a bad ass on the streets who could talk to her momma anyway, 'cause one: she's black; two: she's from Compton, and she don't play that.

I really regret hitting her. It wasn't worth it 'cause if I wasn't talking back to her, it wouldn't have given her a reason to hit me.

In the end I didn't accomplish anything, but I did have a heart full of guilt, and I cried all night. I woke up the next morning and apologized to my mother and enjoyed Christmas with my family. I love you mom.

-Iyisha, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Good story about a very confused moment. Sounds like your apology was accepted and all ended well.

My Mom

To some people inspiration is just a word, but to me inspiration is way much more.

I look at inspiration everyday when I look into my mother's eyes. How God has blessed me with such a wonderful woman in my life, someone who is so caring, and loves me unconditionally, a woman with a beautiful soul. God must have spent a little more time on her.

I want to make her proud. She's an extraordinary woman, even through all the pain and stress, she still pulls through. She's so strong. When I feel down I close my eyes and imagine her smile, her comfort, her hugs.

My dear mother - I love you so much. Inspiration is a word, but to me, I look at you mommy, and you are my inspiration. I'm proud to be your daughter. I'm truly blessed. One love. Loyalty, trust, respect, gone.

-Christina, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Show this piece to your mom. We guarantee she'll keep it forever.

Thoughts On Gun Violence

Ok, today I got into a heated conversation with a Beat staff about guns and she wanted me to write my thoughts on the situation so here I go.

The way I see it is if you are in the life of the streets or not, you are going to need some type of gun. The reason I say that is 'cause people get hit on the daily no matter who they are-- casualties, innocent by-stander or whatever, 'cause this generation, the way the OGs see it, is a lost cause and ain't got no order or control. That's why I feel like this: I'd rather get caught with one then be slipping without one and risk getting over some bull, 'cause if I got one, then I got two choices, which are to shoot back and run, hoping that I don't get hit, or be completely slippin' and let the person run up on me because I'm not paying attention and they knock my wig completely back and people screaming out "(RIP) Lil' Solid!" which I'm not gonna let go down. That's a sucka way to go out and that's why I'm not going out like that or letting it go down that way, no siree bob, that's not my job. I don't do that, I thought ya'll knew that.

-Deuces, Alameda

From The Beat: You sound like a smart young man who doesn't want to get killed. What are your ideas for decreasing the violence then, if guns are needed for self-defence?

Learning From The Past

What's up Beat? The topic of today is learning from the past. Well, in my life I've been through a lot of hard times, but I think that has helped me a lot. I think it has helped me because I've learned from a lot of mistakes. They show me what I can change from my life. It also has helped me because now I know what to do and not what to do.

-S

From The Beat: We're glad that this negative experience might produce some positive results. But we wish you had told us some of what you have learned, and especially what you will change as a result of being here.

Forgive, Move On To Something Better

As time go by

I think, I wonder, then I start to realize

The girl I use to be vanished in thin air

Everyday is a struggle to survive

'Cause in this life you can go anytime

2008 got beat with a pistol got drug by a car

Got ran over

Now look at me

I'm behind bars

But this time around

I found the one

But I don't know if he plays with guns

He treats me like a queen

Buy me diamonds show me things

I'm his queen he's my king

He treats me to the finer things

Take me shopping at the mall

Put minutes on the phone so I can call

Together we gone to be forever

Nothing can break us apart

'Cause I'm his diamond and he's my star.

-Shanae, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a great piece - thanks for sharing with The Beat. Just keep in mind though that just because someone spends money on you doesn't mean they love or respect you. It doesn't mean they don't either, but make sure he can be there for you in more ways than money.

To Forgive

Well, first and foremost, I would like to give my most respect to the homeboys. This the homeboy G coming at you from the max unit.

Well, today, I'ma be writing about forgiveness. When my homeboys let me down, sometimes I forgive them, but I never forget. And it depends on what they did for me to forgive them.

One time I was betrayed was when I recently got locked up. I got locked up and somebody snitched on me. It's kind of messed up. I had respect for that foo'. I was coo' with him. He was kinda like family through family, or that's how I looked at it, even though I didn't know him for long. Well yeah, that foo' snitched on me, and it is kind of hard to deal with. But forget it, shhh happens,

I responded in a messed up way 'cause I was hella mad. It messed up my relationship because now I say forget that foo'. I am facing life because somebody wants to go and run their mouth. But that's how shhh is. Some people are just afraid of these walls. And that foo's one of those people.

-Lil' G, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Perhaps one day, as you mature, you'll realize that taking a life is the reason you've forfeited your freedom, and not that some foo' snitched on you. Until you get as angry at the crime that precipitated the "betrayal" as you are about the snitch, you will miss something essential about your humanity.

Stay True

You may look at me and see
The person you think I am
Or who you want me to be.
But looking into my eyes you can see differently,
I'm not the misguided that you seem to believe.
Seventeen-years old with no parents to be my guide,
Just me and my sisters holding onto each other to survive.
No matter what I go through I know they will always be there
Listening supportively, letting me know they care
Life is a struggle that you have to override
Don't let anyone or anything take away your pride,
Be who you are not who they want to be.
Stay true to your heart and do your part
To one day make them see
That you were more than what they perceive to believe.
I may be locked up but in my heart and my mind, I'm free.
No one can take away your freedom to dream and believe.
So hold your head up go on and be strong and always
remember this is just temporary one day you'll go home.

-Sadisha, Alameda

From The Beat: This is such a soul stirring poem. We know that sometimes parents aren't there for us but you're very lucky to have such supportive sisters. Did you know that most people judge you by the way you look rather than who you really are? But it's a very beautiful thing when you stay strong and true to yourself because so many kids now lose themselves in the hype of fitting in. Have your sister's told you how you feel about you being locked up? If so, how did that make you feel?

Yeah, I Love You With All My Heart

What's really 'hood? It's ya boy, Tizzle, down here at the Ranch. Same ol' shhh. But, yeah, I been doing a lot of thinking 'bout my wifey. Man, I really miss her like crazy. We be talking 'bout hella shhh. She be telling me she want me to get out and do the right thing. I told her the only thing I could do is try.

But sometimes I be havin' thoughts 'bout doing the right thing, 'cause a few years down the line I'm go' need a good job to support my family when I do have my kids. But, yeah, I really love my wifey. She hold me down when I need somebody to talk to. I could talk to her 'bout my problems and she understand where I come from. We relate on the things I bring up to her.

But, yeah, I ain't go lie, I love her with all my heart. I truly think she the one for me and I'm the one for her. We have our ups and we have our downs, but that's go' happen in relationships. She really somebody special in my life, and I'm special in her life. When we, like, kinda old, we go' get married.

But once I come home, we go' have a baby. I'm go' be there at all times. That's one thing we be talk about, and that's one thing I think 'bout every day. At first I wasn't go' have kids until I got with her. She the right one to have a baby with. But I got strong solid feelings for her. I really love her, and she know that, and I know she loves me, so when I get out I'm go spend a lot of time with her. I'm gone. One love.

-Tizzle, San Francisco

From The Beat: You're lucky to have someone like this in your life, a true treasure you left behind by your own actions. But we urge you strongly to be with her for a while and to get yourself back on track (school, a job, etc.) before you bring another child into this world. There's no more difficult job than being a parent, so it's not something to do just because you and she love each other. Let your relationship grow slowly and naturally, and, meanwhile, finish school and get some real, legit work so you'll be able to support your family and feel the pride of responsible adulthood.

In Jail

In Jail where I never thought I'll be. Sittin' in a cell ready to weep but I got to keep on going on with my life. Tryin' to accomplish something, it's only right. In jail where I'm sittin' for my crime I'm sittin' in my cell with nothin' but time. In Jail I wish somebody would have threw me a line so I could of caught on, now it feels like I'm dyin'.

In Jail that's how it makes you feel then people sayin' you too hyper need to take these pills. In Jail where the white man makes money off us you have to be strong u have to be tough. Kids, adults on the basketball court, everybody plays rough you on the streets with yo heat on the corner where the white man want you to be gives you crack gives you weed sayin' I ain't gone get caught I'm gone do me fresh clothes new shoes on your feet dope in yo pocket ready grind, 5-0 hit the corner in Jail get in Line in Jail.

-Young Boobie, Alameda

From The Beat: Another powerful piece Boobie. We hear you working out the complicated issues and forces that bring people to jail. You have to fight back and not cooperate with this plan! Ultimately you are the creator of your life, even when the cards are stacked against you. What's the first step you can take to reclaim your life, and your self?

To Go Hard Or Go Home

What's up? It's Sleep. I been in here for a little bit now. I feel real stupid now I got myself here. I always walk up and down these halls very depressed. Coming here makes me feel like shhh. When I did what I did, I was going hard. I should have went home, but I wasn't thinking. I'm sure if I would have taken a few more seconds, then I would have not done what I did.

When I get out, I'm gone change my life and go to school and do my own thing and leave the thing the alone, you heard. Motivation plus determination equals achievement, and that's what I'm gone do — get out, get a legit job, and do my thang. So yeah, I'ma fall back, and done.

-Sleepy, San Francisco

From The Beat: We admire your determination to make the changes you know you have to make if you want to move forward and be free. It's not easy, but neither is coming to lock-up easy. Besides motivation and determination, we want to give you one more: attitude. As a friend recently told us, your attitude will determine your attitude.

How I'm Feeling

Man, it's really getting phony in here. Staff starting to hate on me and my ninjas, but it's nothing. We gone handle that when we get out. I don't want to catch another case, but I'm feeling like "Forget it, fo' real. Plus I forgive for those who son I didn't do something to.

If I can, I'll give all this up, especially these phony-ass girls. All they want is the D's. Then they want it from the enemy or who got they name out there. But that's just them.

Yeah, I got two to three years, but the way I'm feeling right now ain't even cool, you hear me. Man, my ninjas keep coming back after saying they gone stay out. Man, I don't even know if I learned my lesson... 'cause this jail got me feeling worse, like I'll do it again.

Catch me later. I'm gone.

-Yung Rell, San Francisco

From The Beat: You know Yung Rell, if you think of all the people whose salaries depend on processing you through The System, then you'll understand why the system is prepared for you to go out and come back again. What the system is not prepared for is you finding the courage to take your part of the responsibility for why you are 'feeling worse.' Yes, the system is also responsible for how you feel, but you can only look at yourself as an agent for change, not the system. The system will not change. Can you? There are times in life when letting your brain overrule your heart is the right thing to do.

I Have Given It All

I have given it all up
My heart is empty
And my spirit alive
Feeling like giving up
I write my feelings in The Beat
Writing 'til the day I die
'Til then, hoping not to mess up
Trying not to weep
Cuando pienso en ti (when I'm thinking about you)
Life is messed up
Also a trick
Always tirando adelante
Un dia espero albidarme de ti

-Lavelle, San Francisco

From The Beat: We can understand why you would feel like giving up sometimes. But feeling like it and doing it are two very different things, and we don't see you giving up for real. Each week you put it down for us, and that tells us you are still very much a part of this world. You have a future!

Sitting In My Cage

Late last night, I sat and thought about why the judge gave me six months in this stupid program.
I was already sentenced. There was nowhere to run. There was nothing I could do.
I sat in my room in my Pod and found myself in deep thought.
Maybe it was a good thing that I was here after all.
Maybe this is a good thing. I have a lot of work to do with myself.
They are going to send me to the other side to start my time so I wait patiently.

-Juanita, Fresno

From The Beat: It takes a lot of courage to look the actions we took which led to our incarceration. What did we do? Where were we? How could it have been different? What decisions or actions did we make? If we don't examine and acknowledge our actions then we will repeat them. We admire your courage.

It Takes A Lot To Cut A Song

Sitting in my bedroom last night, I sat up and talked with my roommate about the music business like we always do. I currently intern at a recording studio engineering sessions. I've met a lot of people, seen a lot of things and been a lot of places, so I kind of know the business. I worked hard to get to that position, too. My roommate wants to be a rapper (he is good too) so we talk about a various amount of things, like what's a typical day like as a rapper, how studio time works, sound quality and all sorts of technical things.

Before coming in this hellhole, I worked on a song with a local rap artist, and sat in multiple sessions with other artists. It takes a lot to make a song. It's hard work. I was talking to one of my patnas and he was like, "Ah bruh, it must be hella fun, You don't be doing nothing there, huh?" That's the funny thing, 'cause it actually takes a lot and goes through a lot of people just to make one song sound up to par — at least, four days to complete one good song. So I have talks with my roommate with the experiences I've had, things I've done, and the thing that I've been around.

-Dan, San Francisco

From The Beat: It sounds like you had a lot going for you before you put yourself in this "hellhole." We hope you are able to learn from this experience that the work you were doing out there and the things you were learning about the business are worth a lot more than whatever you gained from the behavior that got you here. (We know what you lost...) In any case, it sounds like you and your roommate are having some constructive discussions.

Skip's Broadcast: Learning From The Past

Young people, old people, the ones that cannot grow people! What's poppin', man? This the Fly Boy Skip holdin' this pencil down on this paper, while holdin' myself down in this hellhole.

I'm 'bout to go knock this time out in Wyoming for six months its playtime really, so I'ma try to do it.

But yeah, more than 100 years ago George Santayana wrote "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." From my point of view I think what he meant by that is remember anything that you have done in the past because if it was wrong and you forget about it, you are bound to do it all over again, and that's not a good look for anybody, man. Like if I went to jail for something really severe, and I just do my time and get out and not trip off it, I am likely to do it again.

-Skip Too Fly, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you do more than just "knock your time out" in Wyoming, Skip. You are much too curious about the world to settle for so little. It's not play time, it's learn time. Learn as much as you can. Soak in new experiences and new places so that you continue to grow. It's not just remembering our past that keeps us from repeating mistakes, it's also learning from our present. Remember that your attitude will determine your altitude, so be positive and soar high.

Keep Ya Head Up (Twin)

I can't remember, but I was told
When I was two years old
My mama started smoking dope
And started playing with her nose
I was taken from my moms
An' put wit' my grams,
Running around the courtroom
The judge was like, "Damn
Get a hold of lil' Twin,
And please set her down"
Growing up, ninjas stay smokin' in front of gram's house
With the doors wide open,
Running down he street 'cause I see my pops,
"Daddy."
An' when you get there, "Oh, shhh!"
The cops, they hitting 'im all in the face,
Even spraying him wit' mace
Took out the joystick an' caught another damn case
Beat 'im all in his eyes, an' there ain't so surprise
Until this day, my pops is 90% blind

Chorus:

Ooh, child, things are gonna get easier
Ooh, child, things will get brighter
Ooh, child, things are gonna get easier
Ooh, child, things will get brighter

But that ain't stop 'im, my pops still a G
Keep spittin' them raps, pops keep on makin' them beats
'Cause you an' my grams just raised a hell of a beast
So I moved to San Francisco an' ran into (Caprice)
What? Who is she? A young version of me
My lil' freakin' sister who she happen to be
In, in-out the halls, running these TL streets
I'm so heavy on my grind, so respect my mind
At 15 years and I made a hell of a dime (son)

Chorus:

Ooh, child, things are gonna get easier
Ooh, child, things will get brighter
Ooh, child, things are gonna get easier
Ooh, child, things will get brighter

An' this is my sorry for all the things I did wrong
When my grandma did her best to put me in a better home
An' there was times I felt alone,
Havin' nightmares that my big brother's gone
'Cause a so-called friend put a nine to his dong
My life is dead wrong

-Mercedes, San Francisco

From The Beat: How can you turn your considerable skills — your ability to turn pain into poetry — to your advantage? We know you don't see yourself as a prisoner in the future, so tell us what you see, and the path you see that will take you there.

To Forgive

It takes time for me to forgive my friends/homies when they let me down because they supposed to be like family, they supposed to have my back. I felt betrayed by my best friend, she was supposed to be my friend 'till the end. We were so close I let her in. Into my home where me and my dude lived.

She snuck behind my back to have an affair with my man, and she knew I didn't share. Gave him what he wanted, and didn't even care. I trusted her with all my heart, but what she did only made me see she wanted to be apart, forget what me and him had, me and her was fam. I thought it was a dream, but it wasn't.

It was all cookies and cream, she was supposed to be my friend 'till the end, but instead she wanted my boyfriend.

-Rilly

From The Beat: Betrayal by loved ones is probably the most difficult thing to forgive. Betrayal this deep takes more than "sorry" to regain the trust that was broken. We hope you've found other people in your life that you can trust, and that you hold on to them.

In My Bedroom Late Last Night

Late last night in my room, I was thinking about all these females on the outs who think we're together. I don't know what I'm gonna do. There's five of them, but three of them all live in the same city. Basically, I gotta make a plan because I'm gonna get caught up.

When I was on the run, I somehow gave these broads the impression that we were in relationships. Now that I got caught up, they are all writing me and expect me to see them the day I get out. They all want to move in with me.

I was in my room last night getting frustrated because these females all got something that's worth keeping. Three of them got a whip. Four of them got jobs and hella money. All five of them either job or a whip, or both. Three of them are squares. Two of them are dumbass crazy. If one of the hood females finds out about these other girls, they gonna get hurt. Basically, I think I gotta make a decision and pick the best one, but it's a hard decision. Life's tough.

- Slick

From The Beat: We agree life is tough. Which one do you have the deepest feelings for? We doubt that girlfriends can be chosen well based on who has more money or a car. We are glad, though, that you are being honest (aren't you?) and that you realize that it's probably best for everyone if you choose one.

To Forgive

It all started in high school and I was friends with Tanisha and her little sister Alisha. We was cool for hecka long, never had a problem or anything. We got into a little high speed chase one time and I ended up doing some ride or die friendship stuff.

Me, her and her boyfriend was hecka cool until one day I went to his house and we was kicking it. Next thing you know he get a phone call and it's either Tanisha or Alisha saying "Anthony, this Teaira, I love you" and all that stuff not even knowing I'm next to him.

It was taking me awhile to talk to her until this day, I will forgive her but we just can't be on the level we was on at first.

-Teaira

From The Beat: Rebuilding trust takes time, it's not something you can rush. If your friend really cares about you and wants to make things right with you, they'll wait for you to get there.

Every time I Go To Court

Every time I go to school, I get sweaty palms, rapid heartbeat.

I can't even think what it's gonna be.

Hopefully I will get out so I can show everybody what I'm about.

People don't know what's going on in my dome.

I want to be free.

I want to be normal.

I want one more chance in my hands.

- Jamari

From The Beat: We are very much looking forward to knowing more about what is going on in your dome and we hope you succeed in being your truest, best self. You'll get another chance.

The Future

Sitting in my bedroom late last night, just thinking of my future. My future has been my biggest fear lately and I don't know how to overcome it.

Sitting in my room late last night thinking about what my future holds for me. Being in the streets my future never was a big deal. All I ever thought about was what was happening at that moment.

Now that I'm here my future is all I ever think of. Where would I be a few years from now, here or any institute for that matter.

I cry to myself when I feel no one is listening, because I'm tired of being afraid of the life that lies before me. I'm here because I want to change and stop being afraid of what might happen if I do this, or what could have happened when I did that. I want to know what my future has in store for me and the only way to know is to be here to get my thoughts together. And I thought it thru this or anyplace like it ain't for me, and I'm gonna do what it takes to make sure of it.

I'm not afraid of my future anymore because I have goals and things to look forward to, and if being in here for the mean time, then that's what I'm willing to do to get my future in the condition I always wanted. I used to be afraid but not anymore.

-Aperrier'a

From The Beat: We're glad you're thinking about next steps and your future. Keeping the long term in mind is what's going to keep you out the hall. Just make sure you make this a habit - don't forget about the future when you get out and become busy again.

Being in Juvenile Hall

Being in juvenile hall sucks! The food is nasty, you're stuck in one room most of the day, people be yelling at you all the time for any little thing you do or forget to do, but mostly I miss my family and friends. They don't let you use the phone that much so you don't get to talk to a lot of people.

This is my first time in juvenile hall. I've been in here for nine days but it feels like way longer, like I haven't been outside for a month. But now I realize how lucky I was before, how much I took for granted, just being able to go outside, hang out with my friends, to be able to talk on the phone for hours, to sleep in as late as I wanted, to eat what I want, when I want. But I guess it's true you don't know what you got till it's gone. I got court soon, hopefully they let me out of here 'cause now I know.

-Karen

From The Beat: It's good you've learned your lesson, and we hope you never do come back. Learning to appreciate what you have, especially something like your freedom, is a really important thing to get in life.

Beach

When I get out I want to go to the beach and kick it all day. I want to go there because I'll be out and it will be almost summer.

Also I could play football in the sand and kick it with my patnas and my family. It would be a good day because the beach has a clean scene and hecka females.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: This sounds like a beautiful day. What memories do you have of the beach? Did you go there with your family when you were young? With your patnas?

Sitting In My Bedroom Late Last Night

Last night I was just thinking about the outside world. Even though I've been locked up in this Juvenile Hall, I still have a life.

So last night I was thinking about how I'm going to protect myself from this dangerous world that I have to go back to! Only thing I came up with is stay in school and go to college and make something of my life, than be like these busta azz jack jerks on the corner they whole life!

-Droopy

From The Beat: That's definitely a good start. If you stay away from the danger by keeping yourself occupied with positive things, you'll have a much better chance of being safe, and making something of your life. It's all about who you spend your time with.

Lost Brothers

I lost so many of my brothers within the last three years.

Seen so many mamas cry so many tears.

Gary, Donal, Jae and Wayne.

That's a couple of my brothers I lost to this game.

I then lost a gang of boys on these streets in the war.

- Brandon

From The Beat: Brandon, we are so sorry you have lost so many loved ones. Do you have any ideas of how to end such violence? What can change? What can each of us do?

Forgiveness

I forgave my brother for putting me in this place. I ain't tripping because he is my family, and the gang task force raided my house in Fremont. My brother had his stash of weed in my room. I couldn't snitch because that's against my religion. So now I'm looking at camp.

-M

From The Beat: Hey M, thank you for sharing this story. How did it feel when you took the blame for your brother's weed? Was there a part of you that wanted to tell the truth? Did forgiveness come to you automatically, or was it difficult to forgive him? We hope this is the last time you get put in this position....

Screw Forgiving

When someone close to you let you down, some people forgive. Me myself I don't forgive anybody. Why? Because I feel that if you did something you know what you were doing, so in my opinion I don't forgive a soul, like especially if a ninja snitching or killed one of my family members or hurt them. I know I do stuff and karma can come back on one of my family members or someone I care about, but I still won't forgive anybody.

-Krazy Dre

From The Beat: Holding people accountable for their actions is important. But it does sound a little bit like you know you've betrayed others, and would expect their forgiveness, but you wouldn't do the same for them. Maybe we're misinterpreting what you're saying, but that's definitely something to think about...

To Forgive

If you can't forgive, how can you ask God for forgiveness? God's words are:

Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen!!

In other words, whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your father in Heaven may also forgive you and your trespasses.

- Flaco

From The Beat: You make a good point, Flaco. Forgiving isn't easy. We are glad that you are so determined. Good luck.

Bye

Today is my last day,
a true and begotten day,
never wish never yearn,
my spirit just stay at bay,
I'm with it you know I get it,
ain't got it then I'm gone get it,
I'm a cop it, I'm a flip it, get with it and I'm gone,
stick with it, a duffle bad in my hand,
I'm the man, ten bricks in it,
get it and I'm gone stick with it,
hit it and I stay getting it.

-Mays

From The Beat: Mays, we wish you well. We hope you keep writing poetry and raps, and that you keep thinking critically. You are an intelligent young man with real potential, so we hope you are speaking metaphorically when you talk about getting your 10 bricks...

Sitting In My Bedroom

Sitting in my bedroom late last night I thought about all the mistakes I made in the life. From cutting school to smoking weed.

Why did I do that, I want to succeed.

I used to hit people and take all their money.

Watching them scream and holler used to be so funny.

Now I look back at it and it isn't funny at all.

I asked God for forgiveness when I got locked up in the hall.

Sitting in my bedroom late last night

I wanted to stab somebody with a butcher knife

but no...I want to change and that's not a good thing to do.

I can't wait until I go home and see my boo!

-Ty-boogie

From The Beat: Wanting to change is half the battle - a lot of people will never change for the better because they don't see anything wrong with what they're doing. The next step is to figure out how. What do you need to do to change? What does change look like to you?

Give It All Up

My life been bad decisions, most of it.

I had to learn from my mistakes.

Some of my mistakes I wish I had never experienced.

Sometimes all I been through I want to give up - being in the hood.

I want to give it all up. And selling drugs I want to give up.

When I gave my life to God, I gave my bad ways up. I was getting tired of getting in trouble.

- Marquise

From The Beat: We know you didn't finish this, but we think this much is important to print! We hope you succeed in staying out of trouble! One step at a time.

In The Hall

What's up Beat! I don't feel like writing on the topic so I'm just going to tell you what's it like up in the hall!

This place is cold boring, and you can't have any fun. The staff is coo' but we only get to go outside for a little bit.

It's nothing like being at home, there's no family here for you to be with just strangers you don't know.

I've been here for a month and a half already just waiting to go to camp. It's going to be at least another month then I do 6 to 9 months more. What makes it better in here is that I got my homies here with me. Doing their time trying to get back home. That's it for now.

-Lil' Sticks

From The Beat: Thanks for describing what being in the hall is like for you, especially for those readers who have never been where you are. Having good people around you (staff, homies) definitely makes things easier. DO your program so you do not return! Be smart!

Can't Wait

till I get out of being around all these dude. Can't come out my room when I want. Eating when they want us to eat. Go outside when they want us to go out side. That just aint me I know you feel me.

-M

From The Beat: We hear what you're saying and want you to be sure you've figured out what you need to do to never return. Have you?

Get Out

When I get out I'm never coming back here because I hate this place. And I miss my family members and my lil' sister and brothers.

-Mikey

From The Beat: You need to figure out what you need to do differently in your life to make sure you don't come back. What changes do you need to make? Where do you slip?

Resurrected

Intro: yeah, what's up with it this is just a little song I wrote, feel me, while on this 23-hour lock down. Been on it since 11/12/08. Scope it out...

I've been gone for a minute. I had to get my head straight
I rose from the dirt resurrected from the grave
the one who brought you solider an' bangin' is my mentality
another fallen casualty with too many tragedies
blood flowin' down up on them streets, yeah, it's that streetlife
everywhere it's all the same, people got guns an' got knives
they dying for strive, but I'm dyin' to live
'cause ain't nobody but me goin' struggle to feed my kids
March, 25, 2006 you still in my memory
rest in playadise and save me a spot for when I go, homie
I'm pourin' out this forty an' a sheddin' bloody tears
whoever thought this is what I'll become after all of these years
a poetic mind just like Professor Blackmind
I'm from San Francisco, California, surrounded by landmines
still doin' time after all of these court dates
been to camp, YGC, Stanislas, and Tulare County
Alameda, Napa and Seneca Center couldn't hold me
but that's part of the reason of why I'm so worthy
Lil' Savage on the track
whoever thought that was this soldado puttin' my lyrics on the map

The dark comes to light after so much time
people say I'm a gangsta, I just pour out my heart, when I rhyme
that's straight from inside, so I know you feel this
resurrected from the grave to spit an' rep for the realest

Followed in daddy's footsteps, so like father like son
it all started when under the couch I found that gun
I took 'cause pops was in the county at the time
at the time I was nine with only one thing on my mind
was to be like daddy an' rep for my side
pops got forty-to-life so now it was my time
to keep my family's honor and also shine
but let me take it further down my legacy
I'm a nineties baby, a year after eighties ended

born in El Salvador when the civil war was blazing
Salvadorian an' Mexican Father
Hawaiian an' Puerto Rican Momma
eighteen years later Latin rap bomber
take it a lil' farther, this latin civil war runs through my blood
every generation got a member of my family as a thug
but I'm a cholo, dickies or ben davis creased
the veteranos is what influenced
just let me be is what I tell my PO
don't snitch, turn soft, or will ever become a DOA
just keep on strivin', rep for my folks
it's two sides to the game 'cause life ain't no joke

The dark comes to the light after so much time
people say I'm a gangsta, I just pour my heart when I rhyme
that's straight from inside so I know you feel this
resurrected from the grave to spit and rep for the realest

A moment of silence to all of the fallen soldiers

Now let me get back lacin' boots of these young recruits
separate the real from the fake is what I'm 'bout to pursue
down to do time in pen down to ride for yo cause
down to hit that hole whenever duty calls
you probably thinkin' I ain't never goin' hit the pen
well you trippin' lil' homie, betta guess again
ain't just 'bout sippin' Henn or sittin' on fours
this new era is lost, don't even know what they bangin' for
ain't no OG.s on the block, they all boxed up
they either strung out on dope or in the pen locked up
an' my generation crazy, we worse than before
I gotta look both ways before I lock my door
they see my tatoos, battlescars and the color of my rag
Mission district police know my whole family now, ain't that sad

Outro - yeah, just a lil' someting to think about. It's time to educate our youngstas, put 'm up on game, this war ain't ending anytime soon and that's real talk - look at the homeboys before us lookin' down on our generation talkin' 'bout they got no heart or solid mind frame. We got to get this sewed up so they really can't stand us.

- G-Shadow

From The Beat: As for this song, it leaves us a little speechless, too moved for words. So we'll say what we've said before: 1) you have more choices than you know and 2) how are you going to help others find such strength in words? And, of course, 3) what if you were to put all this energy into ending the game, rather than playing it?

Let It Rain

Verse 1:

let it pour so I could conceal these tears
never wept 'cause of joy
never wept 'cause of fear
they took my homeboy away
March 25, 2006 was the day
revenge is sweet but not so great
it's grimy on my side of the bay
too many losses too many casualties
and to help me ease the pain I down a 5th of Hennessy
I'm livin' up in misery 'cause they took a solid solider
doin' donuts in the whip and bendin' corners
Girbauds and throwbacks and thirty inch chains
an' everytime he smiled gold teeth bling man
I prayin' for better days but I still reminisce
chillin' in the hood while stackin' chips
ain't nothing changed except the new thugs that's here
an' for the big homie in my heart, ain't but love here
the whole hood sheddin' tears and was ready for revenge
rest in peace chino, gone but not forgotten

Chorus - repeat 2x:

God why you couldn't take me
I'm always on the run, always in them streets
now I sayin' rest in peace an' I got too much pain
so I could release my tears can you please let it rain

Verse 2:

as I sit in my cell I got hella frustration
then my thoughts turn rotten until I'm contemplating
why did you take my boy, why you couldn't take me
I was ready to die, I was ready to rest in peace
momma forgive me for the pain that I caused
354 days strong behind these walls
will I make it up to heaven, only time will tell
at first I wasn't worthy, got casted down to hell
I'm a soulja so I'm goin' rep the homie 'til I'm deceased

and who ever tries to disrespect goin' to have to answer
to me
It's been two years, three months and sixteen days you
been gone
my eyes are watery writin' for you this song
it's kind of hard to say goodbye, so I won't say it that way
rest in peace big homie, we goin' see you one day
and when we met again, we goin' take our moment to
remember
drink in our Henny 'cause you wasn't into wasting liquor.

Repeat chorus 2x

Verse 3:

deep sleep records gonna always be yo family
I'm still pissed off just like yo brother P-Cee
rest in playadise 'cause we got to get through this
but now we ride and get this paper for your kids
I remember the first day I met ya we blazed up the
greenery
surrounded by big homies to who I pledge my respect and
loyalty
the older homie told me to mention that I know how to
spit
but now I'm pissed off because I never mentioned it
I remember you told me to fight my brother 'cause he was
talkin' mess
an' also to prove our hood was the best over rest
a true G to ever walk the mission district
we miss ya 'cause you were the realest ninja that I knew
so nothin' but the most love respect and loyalty too
and when I got the phone call I couldn't take it, I just wept
rest in peace, with much respect

Dedicated to Chino, rest in peace homeboy, gone but not
forgotten.

- G-Shadow

From The Beat: What a great homage to a lost friend, Shadow. We hope
this knowledge and pain will motivate you to keep safe and do something
with your life. Also, Happy Birthday!

Moolah

Sitting in my bedroom late last night, I was thinking
about how I am going to change my life, how I am going to
make more money in many different ways. All I want is to
go home and take care of my family and live like a grown
man. Life with family, friends, and money is on my mind,
so I am going to get it any way I can.

- Kaulana

From The Beat: Money is important, but so is being safe. So is building
a future, slowly, carefully, legally. We worry that your good desire to
take care of you family will lead you back to jail, where it will, again,
be impossible to care for them. Be careful, be safe. Your family will be
glad to see you everyday.

2008

The youth in this year really don't fight anymore,
everybody shooting people. These ninjas bootsy they
all started poppin' pills and doin' shhh they wouldn't do
sober.

These new generations don't know how to handle
beef. The old school cats used to handle beef by chuckin'
em but now everybody scared to fight right now!

-Big Body

From The Beat: Why do you think things changed this way, where people
use guns so quickly? Are guns more available? Why would people be
more afraid to fight now than in the old school? Do you think the pills
make people prefer guns to fighting?

Glad to Be Alive

Yeah when I get out no bad decisions I'm gonna get a job
again and be with my lady and do good. I'm sick of being
in here for wrong decisions and accidents. But I'm just
glad to be alive and to have a lot of positive people to be
around.

-John

From The Beat: That's great you have positive people in your life. Good
luck with your new job. We know many young men who have good
relationships that help them make good decisions.

The Circle

When it comes to forgiveness, God always test us as
human beings because God always forgive us, but when
it comes to us forgiving others is the time when God sees
what we do. So whenever someone betrays me, I turn
to God and think of how many mistakes did I make that
God forgave me for them. Then I instantly forgive that
person. for example, my own brother had a set-up on me
with police and the next thing I know, I got arrested and
woke up in jail. Clearly, as the great man says, "what goes
around, comes around."

-Brock Osama

From The Beat: That sounds harsh being set up by your brother. Were
you able to forgive him? Did something happen before that you feel
came back around to this situation with you being set up by him?

Two Sides to the Game

Verse 1

got locked up back in '03 an' I thought I was shhh
 incarcerated for a murder case with a couple homies from
 the click
 but I soon found that not everyone is loyal
 an' not every vato stays true to the soil
 that was in the old YGC. unit B-1
 takin' off fools 'cause of funk an' just for fun
 spent a couple months locked down an' then got shipped
 off
 to a placement with hella fools, so you know heads we
 bump
 so we was eliminatin' the drama down for my pride
 clicked up with a homeboy and he showed me the ropes
 chop it up for a bit an' come to find out he knew some of
 the folks
 so we made blood oath willingly to ride 'til we die
 an' down to watch each other's backs so like family together
 we would ride
 then one day came it was a full fledge riot
 seen my carnal get drop an' swingin' he wasn't even trying
 so I rushed 'm willin' to help that one I cared for
 then I hear a sucka talkin' 'bout my homeboy used to be
 one of them
 so in that point in my life I lost love and respect for him
 but I also did a background check to get my facts straight
 five years later I still reminisce 'bout how I lost a member
 of my family

Chorus, repeat 2x

everything ain't what seems so don't let illusions fool ya
 that's why I try to stay away from them hatas
 come up to me, better have yo facts straight
 'cause love and hate is two sides to the game

Verse 2

I lost a couple folks and lost a couple friends
 in return my heat turned cold in the end
 feel no remorse for a sucka, got no love for a chick
 they either snakes waiting to strike or gold diggers in the
 end
 so I ain't got no friends, only family
 an' those who ain't blood-related got to prove that they
 worthy
 never showed no mercy in the heat of a battle
 'cause most cats just up and go tattle
 and skiddaddle out of the town, leave everything behind
 send good homies up the river walkin' the main line
 you know we all shine
 an' if I had one wish it's for the bullshhh gone
 an' bring chino 'cause to you I dedicate this song
 'cause you was one of the illest an' realest in the game
 you are one of the reasons why I started to rap
 through me your legacy is goin' live on an' that's a fact
 jealous an' vicious is the two sides I can't trust
 I know them money orders ain't enough 'cause my pops
 and tio is still stuck
 an illusion can never let it blind what reality is
 come up to me, betta have yo facts straight 'cause it'll cost
 ya to cross us like bridges on the bay

Chorus, repeat 2x,

It's two sides to the game. which one you on? It's time to
 choose, don't get left in the dust.

- G-Shadow

From The Beat: There is such earnestness, in this piece. Yet, it's not too
 clear what you are striving for. In our experience, relationships, whether
 with friends or family, require some forgiveness. Maybe a lot of forgiveness.
 You are on some solid ground, with your flow and your rhyme and your
 understanding. Isn't it easier to forgive when you are "solid?"

Homicide Rate

I think the homicide rate is increasing because people
 are money hungry and there's a lot of robberies gone bad.
 I think pills have a lot to do with it because pills make
 ninjas hella mad and do stupid stuff.

-Thinking

From The Beat: Others agree with you that pills are making people make
 worse decisions now. How about you? Do you pop pills, and if so do
 you intend to stop? What gets you caught up?

Life

Life is crazy in a lot of different ways, people come they
 go never stays they get a job work so they can get paid got
 to feed they family everyday. Gotta have concentration
 like a chess game when Life gets hard you gotta keep
 your head up even when you fed up with Life.

Life sometimes it can be nothing nice, some people
 all they got to eat is rice. Can't pay the bills so they don't
 have lights, can't take baths no water and Life just get
 harder and harder. Momma on drugs Daddy is too so you
 got to go rob and steal fo new shoes. Life sometimes it's
 just not right tryn to drown you but you gain yo height,
 but when that time comes no mo Life.

-Young Boobie

From The Beat: Another good piece. We like this style of writing you're
 doing, focusing on one issue and looking at it many different ways. We
 notice though that everything here is really hard. We acknowledge that
 all you say is true, yet we also see you smiling a lot. We wonder what
 keeps you going in life? What is good about life to you?

Changes: Sitting In My Bedroom Late Last Night

Late last night I was thinking about making an ultimate
 change. I was thinking that the only way I can make that
 happen is if I stop doing some of the things I was doing
 before, and stop kicking it with the whole same crowd of
 people.

Talking with my brothers and sisters on the phone
 now I know what I want, and barely getting to talk to my
 dad because he's mad at what I did. I know myself since
 day one that I wasn't going to get any visits from no one
 and that is also one of the reasons I want to change my
 life.

I am going to lose lots of friends but it is something
 that I am just going to have to do if I really want to change.
 I'm not going to lose a lot of things but I'm going to get
 my family back to be able to be together, have good days
 together like old times, and get me out of here.

-Juan

From The Beat: It's hard letting go of things you're so used to, especially
 people. But you know what you need to do to do right by you. You may
 lose some friends, but you'll gain some family. Not such a bad thing!

Ya Touch

Sittin' in my bedroom last night
 Tryna remember what ya touch feel like
 It ain't no secret I been gone for awhile
 ya Brighten up my day wif jus one smile

-Nam

From The Beat: This is a great beginning...

Givin Thanks

I would like to say thanks to the lord, then my family for not ever accusing or turning their backs on me. I know I did a lot of things when I was a knucklehead, but to the lord and my family all of that is dead.

That's why I would like to say thanks to the lord and my family, because you were the ones who really could understand me. I couldn't understand myself and that's where I went wrong. Ya'll always had my back that's why I'm givin' thanks up in this song.

When I said my potnas were my friends, ya'll would say they were not-if I keep hangin' out with them I'm a get killed or get knocked. I would like to say thank you for all that ya'll done because when I get out this time ya'll gonna see the change in ya'll son. Thank You.

-Lil'Rolo

From The Beat: This is a beautiful statement of gratitude and intention for the future. Share this with your family, and walk it.

Give It All Up

I want to change my life around and get back on the right path of changing my life around and getting more freedom. Because that is not the life when you're coming in and out of jail. But always remember that block you be on is always going to be there and that gang you're in is always going to be here, but your life is not going to live as long as your block/gang is.

So you got to make a choice. Because my block is still going to be living even when my kids get my age. So pick your life now and live it because that block and gang claim is still going to be in you forever. So live your life! RIP to my big brother Miguel.

-Lil' Miguel

From The Beat: You're writing is a little bit confusing - you say that you should live your life because the street will be there forever. Are you encouraging people to live the street life? Are you suggesting people should stay away because the streets go on with or without you, without a second thought? Be more specific!

Memories are Harmful in Here

I was sitting in my bedroom last, and reading my book. All of a sudden I started going back in time reminiscing about a time I was on the outs.

Damn, memories are harmful in here, it makes me feel very bad. I have 7.5 month locked up and I miss my family, my friends write me and say that they miss me. It breaks my heart to know and to see my mom cry.

-Sad Boy

From The Beat: What were the memories that you were having? Does it hurt you to think back on your good memories, or does it sometimes give you comfort? What about just knowing that in seven months you will be home with your family. Are you focusing on that, are you preparing for it?

Money and Power

I think people is killing people because it's cause of money and power. People want power they want to get money and die trying and that's it.

People want to live the rich life like me, I got a dream to go pro in the NBA. I want my son to live his dream, not mine ya dig.

-Julius

From The Beat: We wish you success with your dream and hope you are practicing every chance you get. Money and power seduce people and sometimes they forget what they really love trying to get it. We're glad you want your son to live his dream, he'll need your help!

Still Cool Wit Him

I had a conflict with one of my patnas one day. We got into an argument about something and we started fighting. When we was finished we started walking. Only cause he was my patna we were cool after we was chunkin 'em. I'm still cool wit him.

-K

From The Beat: We think it's good you made it through this conflict without anyone doing more damage. What if one of you had a gun, do you think either of you would have used it? In the Beat piece this week titled "2008" they say that nowadays people are afraid to fight, and that people don't fight because they're poppin' pills etc. Were you guys sober when this happened?

To My Mama

I would like to say thanks to my Mama always got my back through all my drama that's a must cause that's a mother's job gonna have her child back till her body drop My mama got my respect to the good, good fullest and when I get in trouble she tell me it's the end of the bullshhhh

I love my Mama forever with all my heart ain't nobody gonna ever tear us apart

The only one that can do it is God but whatever happens, happens but she gonna be my Mom

I don't with nothin' bad to go wrong but I love my Mama to death so I mention her in the song.

-Lil' Rolo

From The Beat: We're sure she'd appreciate this tribute, have you showed it to her?

Switch It Up

It would be hard for me to give everything up because I'm so used to these streets I've been in them my whole life, feel me.

But it looks like I'm going to have to switch it up because I'm finna be 18, a grown man so I'm tryna get my grown man up, feel me? Get me a 9-5 job, be able to do something good wit my life.

G-Weeze

From The Beat: We respect that though you're used to the street life you've decided to change. We think it may be hard, but worth it! Make good plans, work on your skills while you're locked up. You can do it.

A Good Staff Helps

Sitting in my bedroom last night I thought of a lot of things. I thought about me getting out and being with my family. And try to change my life. But it's not easy stopping what you doing. Lots of people can't stop what they doing because they go broke and people these days don't like bein' broke, other do it to feed the family. But you can make a difference in your life, just have hope.

A couple of weeks ago I didn't really believe in God, but when I prayed to Him, He helped me a lot. Now I do believe in God, that's what's helping me get through these days and with the best staff in jail it's all better. Special thanks to the staff, Smitty, T-will, Ms. Vaughn, Fig, and Johnson. Much love.

-Christian

From The Beat: We're glad you get along with staff - having that support probably makes being there a lot better than it could be. And while it is hard to change your lifestyle, that doesn't make it right. Usually the hard stuff is the most important to do.

Learning From The Past

On July 5, 2008 I came to jail for the first time. I came in here for robbing a man. Even though I knew it was wrong and I paid the consequences I spent a month and two weeks in this hellhole.

Now I'm back and I already been in here for two weeks and the reason I'm in here again is because I beat up this older guy because he bumped into me.

So yeah I guess I didn't learn from my past by not coming in here. So I'm telling you this because I'm asking you to pray for me to get out of here.

-Domo

From The Beat: Do you think beating up the older man was worth going to jail for? Just for him bumping into you? In life you have to learn not to use violence for everything. If you keep thinking that way you're going to be fighting your whole life and going in and out of jail. Think of your actions and is this how you want to continue to live your life? We will pray for you.

Sitting In The Hall

Sitting in the hall late last night

Imagine mama saying what's it gonna take for this boy to do right

Future fading away soon to be out of sight

They say you can't win every fight

I'm going to make sure like yay I'm going to go my hardest

Like a Barry Bonds homerun I'm going to go my farthest

Out of the hall turn my life around so a ninjas can ball

Life up the tree and rise above it all.

-Joseph

From The Beat: Good poem. You can rise above it. This is a temporary set back. Live and learn and it sounds like you got your mama by your side. Continue to think positive and good things will happen.

To Forgive, It Depends

It depends what my homie does when he lets me down. Some things I can forgive but some I can't. Someone I once respected always told me stay away from drugs. Then one day I found out he was using cocaine. I lost all my respect for him.

After that I started smoking weed. And I've been smoking ever since. Our relationship didn't change I just lost my respect for the guy. I guess I was hurt that's why I started smoking and after reading this I realize that I have to stop smoking, so I quit.

-Kevin

From The Beat: You stopped being friends with your homie because he started using drugs? Then you turned around and started smoking. Sometimes our friends need advice and need for us to tell them how we feel. Maybe things would've turned out different, they still can.

Problems With Drugs

One day I'm going to go to the park to smoke some trees and I gave him the money the day before last. So I waited and my friend didn't come so I left. When I saw him on the street a month later. I said, "where you been?" he said he locked himself in his room for three weeks.

I told him you still got my money he said to tell you the truth I use drugs. I looked at him with a mug and he told me that's what he spent my money on. I turned around and walked away.

-Lil' Roro

From The Beat: By your friend telling you he uses drugs could be a way of asking for your help. People get heavily addicted to drugs and end up lost and need someone to help them get out of their ugly situation. What if you were in his shoes?

Sitting in My Bedroom

Sitting in my bedroom late last night I think about when I'm going to go home. I'm stuck here today praying but it didn't work.

I'm getting sent away again, but God is keeping me safe, that's the good thing. I wish I could be at my house chilling but it's not going to be for a while.

I've already been away for 8 months but that was all a waste now I have to start over. I want to go back into time when I was a little kid playing video games not in a cell with four walls closing into you or getting sent to a place where every mistake you do, you get in trouble. Life is hard but you have to go along with it.

-Kumar

From The Beat: You bring up a really good point - the law is rarely forgiving. If you make a mistake and your parents find out, they're more likely to let small stuff slide. But if the cops find out, you don't get that leeway. That's a good thing to remember when it comes to your actions inside and outside the house.

Taking Words into Consideration

I have a friend by the name of Jasmine. Now we have been good friends since the 6th grade.

Now since we have gotten older we're not as close as we used to be but it's like every time I really need her, she's always there for me.

I've been in this relationship for nearly four years and it's had its up's and down's. Now I have been in a little trouble lately and she has been really upset with me. I got in trouble and ended up in jail and she was really disappointed in me.

When I was finally released they put me in a group home and I ended up running. Every time I needed her Jasmine was there. Well, I ended up missing court and a warrant was sent out.

I called Jasmine in a panic and I told her that I didn't want to go back to jail. She told me, from a real friend point of view, how she cared and loved me and was just so worried about me and where my life was headed.

I was sitting alone one day and just started to think about all the stuff I was putting myself and my friend through.

Well, the next day I ended up turning myself in. I'm not so happy about it but now I have a better understanding of life itself.

-Aperrier'a

From The Beat: Sometimes we worry the people we love more than we worry ourselves! We're happy to hear that you're on the road to doing better and we know that you'll work hard to stay on that road. Have you spoken to your friend since then? Did she have a large impact on you turning yourself in?

My Friend's Girl Was Taken

One day when I was at home late at night. My friend's girlfriend, who stayed up stairs from me, came downstairs to my house and I took her to my room.

But my friend found out and he was mad at me for a couple days. But I talk to him and he forgave me. Then the girl said she didn't want to go with him no more because she was sprung off me.

He got mad again at me but I was like oh well it ain't my fault. She said I had more swipe than him. Then he forgave me after a couple days because he got a new girl now. But I took that one too.

-Derrick

From The Beat: They say what goes around comes around. Taking your boy's ladies isn't cool. What if one of your friends takes your girl and you really liked her? OK!

Two Females

What's up with it Beat, this is yo' boy Kash Money from Oakland, and I'm still locked up in Camp Sweeney, and I've already been here for a cool ass night. I'm just waiting for my release so I can get out of this place because it's hella stressful here.

Well my last weekend was on the outs was cool, because I found a new female at a party, and she's hella pretty. Well the next day I was asleep. I don't know how she got my number but she asked me out and I said yes, and I don't know why I said yes, but I just didn't know what to do, because I got this other female that I like and her name is Jackie. I'd rather be with her, because she is hella pretty, and hella fine and she's hella solid, she is the solidest female that I know and I ain't gonna let her go 'cause she likes me hella and I like her hella too.

-Kash Money

From The Beat: We're not gonna lecture you on juggling women, you're still young and not married, but whatever you do, we hope you show respect to both of these girls by being honest with them about how single you are, because lying to either one of these girls is what could make you lose both!

Allesana

My true inspiration is a band called "Allesana". I Love them! Search them up and listen to the song "Abmorsea".

"Sweat drips in my eyes, screams of lust we cry, tonight you are everything, you're everything to me..."

Yes it is Screamo but it's true inspiration.

-Ashley

From The Beat: No matter what genre it is, music can always be inspirational. Do you think that you would ever be interested in writing your own music?

Guns Scare Me

I never held a gun but I seen one. It wasn't too long ago. When I think about guns it scares me especially the sound of it.

Yes, I do believe we should have guns in our communities to keep it safe for a good reason not bad.

No, I don't want my child to pack a gun, it's not safe for youth at such a young age.

-Kim

From The Beat: Who do you think should be allowed to have guns and what age should a person get one?

A Day in The Hood

What's up Beat? I'ma take you on a tour of every day struggle through my hood.

First I wake up after a long night on the spot, kickin' it with my folks, getting' drunk. I get up and take a trip down the main to see who's out. Every block I pass I meet up with another homie as we get deeper and deeper.

We stare down everyone we pass to let them know who runs the block. On the way to the liquor store to get a swisher, we see a car full of people I don't recognize so I throw up the set to let them remember where they at.

They keep driving as I tell my homies, "They know what time it is." After smokin' a blunt, we call up some people to see where it's crackin' fo' the night.

-Boo

From The Beat: We're looking forward to hearing more about your life on the streets. So far it seems like you're living for today, but not tomorrow. Do you see yourself in this same position ten years from now, or do you have a different vision for your future?

Look Now, I'm Gone

What's up Beat, it's yo' boy Bugsy. I'm just writing to say that I'm doing good in Camp Sweeney. And I'm just cool' right now, because I just started going home. I used not give a shhh. but I would like to say that I am almost halfway done with my program.

When I first got here, I was going to run, but my boys were telling me, don't run, and look you'll be gone in a minute. To everyone locked up, be cool, I'm out.

-Bugsy

From The Beat: Congratulations on feeling better about yourself, your program, and your life. It's good that you changed your attitude, because when you think about it, if you don't give a ... about your life, who else will?



Really Mad!

Sitting in my bedroom last night in juvenile, I was thinking about calling my PO so she can send me home on GPS. But these stupid staff police that watch us kept doing hella much saying stupid stuff.

They won't even let me call, so I can be released. I was hella mad but I couldn't do shhh about it. I'm still mad. I hope to get out of here tomorrow and go home.

-Lil' C

From The Beat: Incarceration can get very annoying especially since they can tell us what to do, and all control is forever taken. If you get out, what are you going to do to not come back?

Pigs Feet

My mom and grandmother like to eat pig's feet. They both told me they grew up eating it. I guess eating pig feet runs on my mom's side of the family. I tried eating it before but every time my mom cooks I think it's going to taste nasty because of the way it smelled. They cook it mostly on holidays.

Another weird food I don't like is mayonnaise. I'll eat ketchup or mustard but I won't eat mayonnaise. I have tried it before (unlike pig's feet) but it's the taste and look, plus the smell of it. Every time I tried to eat it I felt like throwing up. I tried it on my sandwich, tuna and even when my mom put in in her potato salad. I just don't understand! Everyone in my family loves them some of that on almost everything they eat. But like people say, everyone is different...

-Cobbra

From The Beat: Too true, everyone is different and we can understand your dislike of mayonnaise and pig's feet. Do you think that when you are older you will like these foods more?

You win!!!

I give,
You take
I'm real,
You're fake.
I love,
You don't.
I commit,
You won't.
I need,
You don't give in.
I lose,
You win.
...Never Again.

-Shadow

From The Beat: So few words, and yet such a clear feeling of love and anger. We bet anyone who has ever fought for love and lost (and we all have, at least once, haven't we) will feel you 100 percent.

A Lot A Lot A Lot

Hey what's up Beat? Today I am going to talk about how bad I want to go home.

Damn, I want to go home hella bad, I need to be with my family and my girlfriend. I haven't been with them for four months. I really miss them a lot, but when I be with them, I am NOT going to get separated from them again. I am going to do right because I really want to go home and not come back.

I miss my girlfriend a lot, a lot, a lot – what you call: A lot. I been going out with her for almost four years already, so I really love her and want to be with her so I am hoping to see her soon. Wow, that's about it for today.

-Luis

From The Beat: Four years! That's a long time. We can feel all the love and determination coming out in this piece... love for your girl and family, determination to make your life better. Are there things you can do starting now, in camp, to help make things easier for you when you get out?

One Change

I forgive but never forget. Through the years, I learned that trust is an important thing and if you give it to the wrong person then you could get back stabbed in the back and messed over.

I only give people one chance and if you mess it up man, no second chance but I still forgive. But you ain't never getting my trust again. Why I'm hella strict 'bout this? It's just how it is.

-Vietnamese Kid

From The Beat: What if someone gave you their trust and you messed that up. Would you want them to forgive you? Sometimes people make mistakes but if they do it over and over it is hard to trust them and think to your self is it worth it.

This Ain't the Life

What's up Beat? I been away from home for a bout ten months. I have no one to blame but one person: Myself. But I found two people. One person who could get you out of anything: God.

The other is myself. I am going to stay out of jail. Because Juvenile Hall is over for me. I get out in eight days. But for the ones who think that this is the life, it ain't. Change it or you will hurt more than yourself.

-Gone Bad Reese

From The Beat: There is a lot of positivity and hope in this piece, plus wisdom too. It reminds of that saying "God helps he who helps himself" Do you believe that is true?

Thinkin' About Loved Ones

What's up Beat? I want to talk about inspiration. The person who inspires me is my girlfriend. She inspires me to be a better person, because when I do illegal things or violate probation, or I end up in jail, she is the first person I think of.

I know I should think of her beforehand, but that's where I mess up... when I'm sitting in my room, she is the person I think of and I start regretting my actions because I miss her a lot. I've been to the hall about 9 times and it sucks that I can't listen to my own advice.

To all the first and second timers to the hall, here's my advice. Think about loved ones before you do anything illegal, you know. And I bet you won't spend as much time as I have in the hall. That's all I got for ya Beat! Over and out!

-David

From The Beat: You have been doing some deep thinking in here – and you touched a truth about losing what we love. ... we forget we love it until we lose it. Is this only about your girl, or is it also about other parts of being out: The wind on your face, the chance to buy a taco, everything there is about freedom that we take for granted? Is it human nature to forget our blessings until we lose them? Or is there something we can do to learn how to treasure what we have, in the moment?

To Forgive

To forgive is a big step in being in here. When you forgive people that brought you here you start to feel better and start to cope with being here.

For the first week I was here, I hated the cops that arrested me, and the judge who detained me. But when I forgave them my time in here started going faster. When you realize that it's your fault that you're in here, it's easier to forgive and forget. Peace out Beat I'm going home tomorrow.

-Joey

From The Beat: Your right people go to jail because of there own actions. The Police and the judge are just doing their job. So being mad at them isn't going to get you anywhere. Good luck with going home.

To Forgive

It's been a couple of times in my life I had to forgive one of my ninjas. For all me and my ninja did something back in the day. Then I didn't get caught but he told them I was involved. Then I got charged with extra charges.

It took a lot to forgive him but eventually I forgave him. But every now and then I still look at him like can I trust this dude or not. In the back of my mind I think I can't trust him.

-Lar

From The Beat: Most of the time it's good to go with are instincts. Maybe your friend was scared and told on you. Just go with your feelings but don't lose a friend if it isn't worth it.

Not Forgive

One day I was with my friend about to go to a party and one of my friend's called his girlfriend. They came and seen him we was about to go to a party but he had catted on us.

The next day he did the same thing. He made us follow him. He wanted us to forgive but we didn't. We stopped being his potna.

-Lil' Dada

From The Beat: Yea, it isn't fun when people ditch you especially more then once. Maybe he felt embarrassed to tell you he wanted to spend time with his girl. To stop being friends with someone is hard and you might end up regretting it in the long run. Wouldn't you want to talk it out with your friends?

I'm Thinkin'

What's happenin' with The Beat? You know me, livin' to the fullest, ya dig. But I'm going good going through it. But I'm good. They ain't tryna let me go. They act like they can't give a thug another chance.

I'm in this thang thinking 'bout my girl. She say she holdin' me down out there. But I got a feeling she not. But it's my fault coming to jail, but all I can't say.

For you thugs out there locked up thinking 'bout your girlfriend, keep yo' head up. And don't love no breezy because she gone get you and rap you. When that happens, when you in jail, it's all bad. But I'm gone.

-Delvonta

From The Beat: Keep thinking, but get deeper. If you don't do things that lead to places like this, then you won't have to worry about someone rapping you...

Ain't No Forgiving

Aabout this forgiving shhh, I hope my people I hurt that care about me forgive me, but as far as ninjas on the outs, they seem like they holdin' grudges, fo' real. My homie beat a ninja' ass and he ain't forgiving him, so it's looking like the streets gone keep holding grudges. I'm gone.

-The Shotty Ninja

From The Beat: Have you ever asked to be forgiven? Who did you ask? Has anyone ever asked you to forgive them? Whether the streets hold grudges or not, what about you, personally? How does holding a grudge affect what you do or don't do?

My Family Gonna Miss A Ninja

What's good with The Beat? This your goon, J.O. You know me! So what's poppin' on the outs? This Ranch ain't the code. Right about now Christmas comin' up soon. My family goin' to miss a ninja. It's cool. I be back in a few months, you know, from finishing fifteen months.

I learn from the past. When one of the homie's purpose to snitch, that makes me vicious, because you don't know who goin' to snitch.

-Jordan

From The Beat: We're sorry you had to spend your Christmas here, and that you family had to spend it without you. But we're wondering whether the lesson you "learned" from the past will really help to keep you at home with your family when you get out of here. Yes, you will be back in the warmth of your family's love soon, but that's the easy part. The hard part is staying out. What do you plan to do to accomplish that?

Real, But Checked

I went to sleep real
Woke up reala
Affiliated
Ex drug deala
Resume silent
Street credit bigger
Click full of soldiers
I neva seen one
I'm what they call a real ninja
Pocket full of cash
Body full of liquor

-Vicious

From The Beat: Why are all the "real ninjas" we read about locked up? We guess this makes ninjas like President-elect Obama fake?

Hard Situation

It's hard to beef wit' a ninja you don't know shhh about. A ninja like me, I keep all my business lower than flat tires on a scrape. But I actually like when a ninja don't take me serious, 'cause then when you get on 'em, the ninja'll neva know what to do next. Like, fo' real, if y'all gon' beef, at least make everything you do count.

I ain't wit' all that drive-by shhh. If anything, I'm hoppin' out an' let a ninja try to run. I'm too fast. And trust me, you will be mad you can't get away, but a good thing about speed is playin' football. That what I wanna do. But the hard situation is the streets. How can I do the football shhh if I'm beefin'?

-Cam D

From The Beat: The short answer to your question is: You can't play football and beef at the same time. You have choices to make, that you can't avoid. If you choose the path you've been on, you'll end up with the same consequences you're experiencing now. If you pursue football (which means pursuing school), you will put yourself on a much better footing for a decent future. But you can't choose both without splitting yourself up the middle. You have a calm core, courage, kindness and especially humor. These are great strengths, but it's up to you to put them to a good cause. Then you can use your own time, energy and talent to scrimmage on the football field.

Thanksgiving, Christmas And New Year's At The Ranch

George: On Thanksgiving, we wake up, clean up, eat breakfast and do nothin'. Then we eat dinner and do nothin'. The Friday after Thanksgiving comes, we wake up and do nothin'. On Thanksgiving, we had watered down turkey soup for dinner, look-alike stuffing with raisins in it, fake cornbread, no mashed potatoes, no candied yams, and no cranberry sauce. How you gonna have stuffing with raisins?

Chris: We had raisins for all three meals on Thanksgiving—breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Jordan: On Christmas, we won't get home passes. We never get home passes. Our family can come up here on rotation. If there's ten guys up here, we get a family visit once every ten weeks. If there's eleven guys up here, our family can come up here every eleven weeks. That's all.

Lil' Rob: They used to get home passes, but they wrecked it.

Jordan: We don't even get phone calls for sure. Sometimes we do.

Chris: They decorate Christmas trees to make us feel bad. When we say we want to be with our families at Christmas, they say we all family.

JT: Their idea of Christmas is putting Christmas lights on a tree.

George: We've got three trees with no presents under them. I've never seen a Christmas tree with no presents underneath.

Young Cam: Guess what we're gonna do on Christmas? Nothing.

Chris: They said they gonna make us run two miles on Christmas. We're supposed to be with our families. We don't have no field trips no more. The last field trip we had, we walked down the hill and ran back up.

Young Cam: Guess what we're gonna do for New Years'... Nothing.

-Chris, JT, Cam, Jordan, George, Lil' Rob

From The Beat: Well, at least the six of you can turn a bleak holiday at the Ranch into a funny (not so funny) description for Beat readers. Your sad description of the NOTHING that happens on Christmas, etc., should spur you into making some changes — the kind that mean you won't have to be locked up again, the kind of changes that lead to a truly "Merry Christmas" at home with your families.

Out An' Dangerous

This yo' boy Curt Co-B, hit you with the no braina! I'm back in this shhhh once more. But hopefully not long. They got a ninja on a weak-ass warrant. I go back to court on the 18th. I'm tryna get out before Xmas hopefully.

They mess with me, but for that time I was out, my name been ringing bells. I been touching shhh, but ain't body shhhh.

But that's all gone change when I touch down and cause hell this time., But y'all know what's going down with these ninjas. I ain't gone say too much about that, so until we meet again, stay up.

-Curt Co-B

From The Beat: We hate seeing you back here, but as long as you continue to see the world in terms of us and them (the cops are "them," the "enemies" who are some steps and blocks away are "them"), you will keep coming back, maybe not to YGC but to some other place, just as bad or worse. It's a no braina! You're doing what you were taught to do, so we have to ask: do you have the courage it takes to do something unexpected, something that will move you away from the violence and toward a decent life in freedom? You have the brains for it, but do you have the heart for it?

Staring Into The Future

Staring at myself in the mirror, I see a beast
Can't express the situation so my mind is in the streets
I feel caged in my mind
It's like my flow doin' time
It's going crazy inside
But when it comes out it's fine
But its not, so I hope it gets better with time
Went to court, judge might give ya bruh six years
My mind's in a state of flux so it ain't really clear
And there's a grim outlook so right now that's my fear
I should've thought of that when I instilled that fear
So again, I see myself looking in the mirror
Can't express the situation so my mind is in fear

-Young Scooby

From The Beat: You closer in that mirror and put the image into the future. What you "should've thought" or done is much less important than what you will think and do to stay out of here, once you touch down. So, what are your thoughts about that?

Tired Of Playing Here

Yo, this your boy, Lam. W hat it do Beat? It yo' boy Lam money talking in YGC. I mean, it ain't bad doing my time in here, going to this bs school in here, no problem.

I'm tired of coming here and ain't tryna do it no mo'. I'ma stay out and money talk, no problem, ya feel me?

-Lam

From The Beat: We had to take out some of your x-rated lines (even if you tried to camouflage them; they made us laugh, but they aren't appropriate for The Beat), and also any efforts to communicate with others locked up here. Can you tell us what you plan to change so that you won't be coming back?

Betrayal Ain't Good

One time I felt betrayed by my homie was when I was in a situation with some homies and my homie turned against me, even though I've been through a lot with my homie. So dude, you feel me, dude just made a wrong move. I forgave him the first time, but now this, the second time, and there ain't no more forgiveness I got left for this person.

-Leaue

From The Beat: (Are we spelling your Beat name right?) It seems like you learned a really important lesson the hard way. Which is, if you're doing things that can get you in trouble, there's always going to be somebody willing to sell you out. The obvious solution is: don't do those kinds of things.

Betrayed

What's up Beat Within? I remember when I got backstabbed. My homie was talking crap behind my back, so what I did was beat his ass. Every time I see him, I beat his ass. Since that happened, I don't trust people. He was my best homie. Not no more, though.

-Snaxx

From The Beat: We're sorry your friend double-crossed you, Snaxx. What did he get out of this betrayal? (As long as you're doing things that someone else can benefit from talking to the cops about, you won't be truly free.)

Stupid Moves

I just messed up hella bad. I made a dumb-ass choice of writing a statement for the PO. I'm trying to save my cuddie's ass, and I put myself in a stupid position. I found out we finna get let go if the fool we supposedly jumped or robbed don't show up at court.

I'm hella mad right now, ya feel me. I'm finna take the blame for all this dumb stuff. I didn't do nothing either, so how mad would y'all be, bruh? I'm finna be up in this thang for hella long. I should've just saved my dumb self.

-Swag

From The Beat: You know, Swag, if you act with honesty and integrity, you won't ever be faced with worrying about what you "should've" done. If you don't jump or rob anyone; don't tell your PO things that aren't true just to protect someone else; and most of all, don't do anything that will put you in the position of losing your freedom and having to do what others tell you to do, then you won't have to worry about what should've been!

I'm Back

What's up Beat? It's Yung Kada. People been like, "Where you been?" I say "MIA." But I'm back again in yo' face. I'm gone tell everybody that I'm back. You better stay out my way. You know I don't play. I'm out, but I be back.

-Yung Kada

From The Beat: We took out your threat. It's not appropriate in The Beat! We think you said all that needs to be said when you wrote, "I'm back again..."

Give It Up

What it do Beat? It's ya boy Kada back again. But yeah, I'm 'bout to tell everybody how I tell people to give it up, give it up before I hit 'em up. People talk a lot, but they not 'bout nothing. Then I holla.

-Yung Kada

From The Beat: As long as you're proud of robbing people, then we're not surprised that you're "back again." But then, you must know the connection between what you did and the consequences, so maybe you like it here.

Miss My Homies

What's up with The Beat? This ya boy Isaiah from the city. But I'm up in here still from September and it's been hella long since I been in here for three months about to be four months. But I'm tripping to see my homies.

They know I'm up in JJC for a minute, but it's good. If I was out, I be smoking and drinking and popping pills. But I don't care. When I get out I'm going to the homie's house to party for me getting out.

-Isaiah

From The Beat: Be careful about that partying, because it's easy to forget consequences when you're messed up. Four months is a long time, but when you think about all the people who are doing years, it might make you rethink that "I don't care" mindset. After all, if you don't care, who will?

Last Time Here

What up Beat? This ya boy Lil' Bra still in this G-thang . My main girl got out, and I hope she stay out. I will try — key word, TRY — to stay out myself.

This I think is my last time in here 'cause this life style ain't me. I can't do what I want to when I want to. I never had a curfew and I have to go to bed by eight-thirty. But yeah, this shhh hell a boosie. Stay strong. Lil' Bra out.

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: We hope you follow through on your plan to make this the last time you're here. You've given us good reasons to want to stay out of here, but you haven't told us what you plan to do differently so that you can keep that promise.

No Equal

What's up? What's happenin', dog? This ya lil' Canon, a real cutthroat ninja. All these other cats is somethin' phony, ya heard? They be poppin' off at the mouth like they just that ninja, for real. But they ain't 'bout it 'bout it, ya heard me?

Most of these clowns I wouldn't even walk or talk with if we was on the outs. They ain't my equal. I can see through these wussy-ass ninjas, dog. And those types don't get no kinda respect from me. I'm just sayin' don't hang with suckas 'cause you could turn into one. I'm audi.

-Canon

From The Beat: You keep looking down your nose at other boys instead of turning your eyes inward and taking stock of what you see there. You say you wouldn't talk or walk with most of the young men locked up with you if you were free, but that's the part you're missing: what makes you EQUAL to everyone else in this place is that you are locked into cages, fed by your keepers like zoo animals, and forced to accommodate each other — no females around! Robert Stroud — the Birdman of Alcatraz — was very smart, and thought of himself as better than all the other men he was in prison with. But like all of them, he died a prisoner.

We Gotta Eat

To sum up al this bs, I hate coming in and out this hellhole. I mean, what I do ain't right, but damn, we gotta eat somehow. Jobs ain't messin' with most black folks, unless we educated or on our shhh. But we usually end up like this because our parents are drug addicts. But at the same time, or they never car. So, if your parents relate to this, try avoiding negative ish.

-Db

From The Beat: Do you steal because you have to eat or because you want something that you don't really have to have? It's important that you understand the importance of getting a good education, especially if your parents don't care about your future. Do you think that there would be less crime — less stealing — if the government paid young people like you to do work around the city (cleaning up, etc.)?

Feeling A Little Sad

When I have problems with my homies or family, when they don't respect me, I feel bad because me homies are like my family. I love my homie like my brother so you feel messed up when they let you down.

But sometimes you need to talk with them to feel so good because sometimes they are misunderstood, or something like that. Right now I feel a little sad 'cause I can't see my family because I'm locked up. I can't see my homie and girlfriend.

-Young Drifter

From The Beat: This place is designed to make you feel sad, and to miss the things you left behind. Some people come back here over and over, as if they like it here better than they like freedom. We hope you aren't like that.

Sitting In My Room Last Night

Man, what's good with The Beat? This ya boy D-Boom, and I'm writin', talkin' 'bout sitting in my room last night. Man, that shhh crazy. I was in my room like, "Damn. I'm missin' my thugs. I'm missin' the block. But most of all, I miss my wife Jazanae. I really need to get home to my baby on some real shhh.

-D

From The Beat: Getting home is hard enough. But staying home, that's what you should be shooting for.

Million Miles

I'll be a million miles away when you get this letter
Smoke bud in the streets can't shake the pain.
I write to remember you, my ninja
And I never would let you down
Ninjas change, but the world still go around
We from the slums
Many nights we done been without
This a letter to my thugs that I'm sending out

-D-Butta

From The Beat: Read the Beat Without section to read what some of those "thugs" write, crying out in pain, and wishing, "If only..."

My Life

When I was in El Salvador, I was very sad because all my family was here in USA. and I was in El Salvador with my grandmother, my grandfather and two brothers. I remember that I liked to go to the Plaza Mundo every day with my friends and my girlfriends.

My girlfriend like to go to my house and played video games. She like to play soccer, but in September 2006, my mother take me here to the USA with my brothers.

But today I'm here in the jail because I was in my school cutting class and my principal checked my backpack and I have a knife.

-Henriquez

The Beat Within: Do you wish you were back at the Plaza Mundo with your friends? How far do you think you can advance in life if you don't go to school?

No Way To Choose

To make me give it all up is because I come YGC again. I can't do nothing 'cause I got no way to choose. I need to do back my own thing.

-Ka cheung

From The Beat: When you are outside, you will be free to choose, again. What will you choose?

My Life Without My Baby

Well, I have been locked up for four weeks and miss my baby girl. Before I got locked up, I was thinking about what I was supposed to do when I got out from my school, and my girl was always telling me this, "Pigase, don't fight. I don't want you to get in trouble because I don't want to go see you locked up!"

And look at me now. I'm locked up in this juvenile, and I want to tell all you guys here and juvenile that be in this place, it's bullshhh. Listen to your family, your girl, or somebody else...

-Franklin

The Beat Within: Your girl gave you good advice. It turns out, she knew what she was talking about. (We had to take out your shout-outs at the end. We don't do lists...)

To Give All Up...

To make me give it all up, it would take a lot. See me, I'm not like every one else. Me? I do what I want to. Sometimes I be cool, but most of the time I be grimy, posted up with all the homies, smokin'. Then the P.D.s come and start to take us down. If we got the things, they take us and them. Then we end up in here writing in The Beat.

-Lil' Recko

The Beat Within: So if you're different because you do what you want to do, are you doing what you want to do right now? Sometimes, acting mature means putting off doing what you want to do right now so that you will have the freedom to do what you want to do in the future.

Forgive Or Not, Give It Up Or Not

It's a lot of thing that you can forgive, but sending somebody to this caged hell hole is not something you can forgive where I come from. So mind your business, family. You will live a lot longer.

Is it worth giving it all up? Is it worth losing your life, your family, your money, your friends, your kids, because when you on the side of my team and looking down a dark barrel of a gun, you better think to yourself: is it worth giving it all up.

-Daddy-O

From The Beat: You should put that last question to yourself. You could soon be looking down the dark barrel of a criminal justice system able to put you behind bars for the rest of your natural life. (Read The Beat Without if you don't believe us.) If that happened, if you never got to walk in freedom again or touch a woman or eat a meal of your choice, would it be worth it? Don't think it can't happen, because it happens every day! (By the way, we had to combine your two pieces into one because we're not publishing one or two sentence pieces. You need to say more than that to get into The Beat.)

My Dogs

This is my story of my pit bull and my min-pin. I was going to buy my pit, and the boys pull me over saying why I'm not at school and some other bs. So I just started running 'cause I didn't want to come to YGC, and lucky me, I got away and went to go buy my pit.

But a month or so later I got caught, but with a little sum-sum, and now I'm up in this bs. Every time I call my mom, I hear two of them fighting, barking, going crazy...

-Trucho

The Beat Within: Sounds like you ran out of luck. Why did you want to get a pit in the first place? What's so special about pit bulls? Do you see any connection between your choices (not to go to school, for example), and your current situation? If this place is bs, then why do the things that lead here?

Give It All Up

Yeah man, you know I'm still up in here tryna knock this little time out like a real ninja, ya heard me? But chea though, I ain't thinking 'bout giving this shhh up right now. I been off the porch for real, for real. I feel it's too late to come and try to stop this shhh.

But yeah, man, I ain't never really thought about what would make me give it up. That's something I'ma think about. But as I think about my life, something gone have to make me give it up.

-Lil' Danny

From The Beat: Of course it's not too late, but it soon could be. How many chances do you think you get before you make that one fatal mistake and lose everything? We just finished reading a letter from someone who wrote from YGC exactly as you are writing now; he wasn't ready to give it up. He's now sitting in jail at age 19 waiting to hear if he'll go to death row or to prison for the rest of his life. He waited too long to make the change he now wishes he had when he was still able to. Yes, think about it before you're in a place where all you can do is think about it...

Is That You

Sitting in my bedroom late last night
Found myself looking in the mirror.
I asked myself,:

"Who is you?" Is that me?

They think I'ma fool, but I'ma G.

Is that you,? You don't have a clue who you are,

Ya so fake I know you'll break.

Ya got caught — you, not me — y'all talk...

Again looking in the mirror

Ask myself, "Who is you, is that me?"

They think I'ma fool but I'ma G.

Is that chu? Ya don't have a clue who ya are...

-D-Butta

From The Beat: Sometimes, there's no difference between a G and a fool. Only a fool would give away his freedom! We just got a letter from a G who wrote exactly what you wrote when he was locked up in YGC. Now, he's 19, sitting in county jail and facing a death sentence or life in prison (without parole). He's a G, all right, but he'll never know a woman's love, never stack another chip, never take a walk outdoors without a gun being trained on him from above... Think about it.

Can't Sleep At Night!

Can't sleep at night thinkin' about court, thinkin' 'bout my family, about my brother, the girl I was supposed to call the night I got caught.

I have no love, only the love of my homies. The love of my family. I prey every night hopin' I get out. Not losin' my hope, so I keep my faith 'cause that's all I have and the lord above me.

Tears in my eye but can never cry.

-Feel Like Cryin'

The Beat Within: When you pray, are you asking only to get out? If so, is it possible that "the lord above" you is also praying to you, asking you for something?

My Family's Sad 'Cause Of Me

Damn, Beat, but I ain't feeling the topics. Right now I was thinking about what I did, and I feel hella sad 'cause I just got a 15-year sentence. But it's all right. I'm gonna do my best, and I know that I can do it. Shhh, man, the only thing I think about is my family — my mom, my sisters — that they're sad 'cause what I did.

But it's all right. My brother is in prison, too, so I know that I ain't gonna be by myself in there. All right, Beat. Lates.

-Ghosty

From The Beat: We're so sorry that you have to go to prison for what you did, but you can do it, just like you said. When you look back, is there anything that you realistically could have done differently so that your mom and sister would not be crying over two boys gone? Take advantage of every program the prison offers to make yourself a stronger person so that when you get out, you will make them and yourself proud.

In The 'Hood

Give it all up? That ain't neva goin'a happen. I love where I came from. The 'hood made me who I am, and when I turn pro. I ain't goin'a switch on ma home, like most of the famous do. I'm goin'a put my ninjas on if I'm shining like the moon. I'm goin'a give some of that light to the stars around me.

I'm in the 'hood, I'm in the 'hood. Straight out the 'hood.

-Phil

From The Beat: You wrote, "I'm in the 'hood, I'm in the 'hood," but there are four thick walls keeping you here. So where are you really? You want to help your boys if you become famous, but you never tell us how you plan to become famous.

Marked Men

I believe that people come back to YGC because they are already tagged by the police officers. So, no matter how good they try to do, police officers stay on your line. Sooner or later they catch you slipping and you end up locked up for making an honest mistake.

-Godfather Nug

The Beat Within: You can blame the cop if you want, but he only got to "catch" you because you slipped, you gave him all the power he needed. So spread a little of that blame around. Not everybody comes back here, so we know it can be done!

I Just Let It Go

I really have a hard time forgiving anyone, so I guess over time, I just let it go. I felt betrayed by a few people and it just went away after time. I thought this boy loved me the way I loved him, but he ended up leaving me for another girl and I really hurt, but I let it go.

-Johnisha

From The Beat: This may not be forgiveness, exactly, but we admire your way of handling disappointments and betrayals. Most of the role models boys have growing up teach them that it's all right to disrespect females, which is too bad. Maybe with your patience, you might be able to educate one or two.

Giving It All Up

When I get a job, I will be getting paid, but not right on sight. When I stole something and sell it, I get the money all in the same day.

I don't think I fear it. I think everybody would think I changed, that I ain't got them back no more, and I'm going up messing with them. But I would gain my freedom, which is very important to me, and being with my mom, who I love a lot. I still have my boys.

-G-Ali

The Beat Within: We don't allow a list of shout-outs, so we had to take your last part out. Are you saying that when you get out of here, you're going to change so that you don't have to give away your freedom again? If so, we applaud your decision!

Pain

Pain since I've lost you, I am lost too
Ninja feeling like he at the bottom, like a horseshoe
Sorry for all the trouble that I put you and your heart through,
You know that I would do anything for a part two,
Ought to be praying for the day you come back to me
saying you forgive me
Give me another chance, I'm needing it like a kidney
I don't wanna advance, gimme back her hands,
Gimme back her touch,
I don't ask for much, \

But I messed up,
I know I messed up,
I admit I messed up,
But everybody mess up,
Now this other ninja locked up,
Telling me and my click don't give a crock
'Cause I from the block
She was my down chick,
I was her soldier,
I was a gangster, she was my shoulder,

-Rico

From The Beat: If you define yourself as a gangster with his girl, you're bound to be separated as you are now. You have to make choices. In this case, you chose to do whatever it was that got you here over her. Maybe next time you'll make a different choice and have a different outcome.

To Give It Up...

I would have to put down the heat. I would have to stop coming around. I wouldn't be able to be anywhere around the Bay. I would have to do it movin'! Sometimes I wish it was that easy, but it ain't!

The streets stay hot even in the coldest winter. If I could do it, I probably would. But in the streets of San Francisco don't get caught without yours. The 'hood is all I got, and I'm trying to make something positive out of it.

Living like this is hell. I keep my prayers with God, and always leave the house with the gun and kept my prayers with God.

-T-Ras

The Beat Within: Of course it's not "that easy," T-Ras, but is this life easy? You describe it as hell, so it must not be. When all you have is a choice between two difficult options, then you should look at them equally. Don't just say it can't be done with exploring. There are people who have done it. Maybe "doin' it movin'" is exactly what needs to happen, but you'll ever know without asking some questions.

A New Ball Game

These dudes out there always speaking my name
When you look into my eyes all you see is flames
The devil enjoy himself he come to play games
Girls say stuff don't know me or my name
You go to jail, be gone, come back, it's still the same
When you leave for a long time your relationship down
the drain I'm just saying it's a new ball game

-Dewonta

From The Beat: If nothing changes, it's always the same/ Then expecting something different is really insane/ If want things to be different, we'll give you this tip/ Nothing will change until you flip the script!

Running Thangs

What's up with The Beat? This ya boy Jeez. I ain't been on this thang for a minute, but I'm back active on this thang. As y'all know, this new unit open and you know we running thangs. Running boys out the unit ya know how we do.

-P Jeezy

From The Beat: So, let's see if we understand... You're locked up taking orders from a bunch of strangers telling you when to talk and when to shut up, when to walk and when to lock up, when to sleep and when to get up... but you're running things?

Skip's Broadcast: Sittin' In My Room

Yesterday I made a retarded decision
Lil dawg said something so we had a condition
Now I'm sitting in my room thinking, "Just my luck!"
But I had to stand tall like a monster truck
I coulda swallowed my pride and walked away
But bruh kept talking so he lost his day
A I sit in this room looking at the stars
I wonder if the aliens could have a party on Mars
See stuff like this wall mess wit' ya brain
Now the time moving fast like the carpool lane
These ninjas on the vent making lots a static
Man, these little boys slow like mornin' traffic
Now I see the nurse to get my sleeping pill
Say was up to my ninjas, gotta keep it trill
Thinking 'bout my mama, trying not to weep
I pull my sheet over my head and slowly fall asleep

-Skip Too Fly

From The Beat: There are days when the only real thing we can do weep... or sleep. The thing to remember is that they are only some days. Other days are what to look forward to.

Fake Ninjas Got Me In Here

I don't forgive people who disrespect me, and my family. Because what if I forgive him and he just turned around and just backstabbed me or something like that? That's why I don't forgive people who really disrespected my family or me.

I'll give up hangin' with the people got me in here because I ain't gonna come back out and chill with the same people who snitched on me. I know they're gonna do the same thing once they know that I am out. So I'll give up hangin' with fake-ass ninjas.

-Not Signed

From The Beat: We combined your two pieces into one because by themselves, they weren't long enough. If the lesson you learned by coming here is just don't hang with the wrong people, then you have more lessons to learn. As long as you do the things that others can snitch you out for doing, then you won't escape places like this. It's your behavior, and not whatever anyone else does, that will determine your future.

Fast Life

I lead a crazy life, man. It's very much crazy where I come from. It's either kill or be killed, I hate that I have to live this way because it make my mama and papa cry. I was raised this way not by my parents, but by my brother. He was my papa for more than twelve years.

-Super Taco

From The Beat: Why did your brother raise you, and not your parents? What can you do to dry those tears your mama and papa are crying for you?

Wrong Place, Wrong time

I wanna get out 'cause I'm being blamed for something. I didn't do anything wrong. I guess I was at the wrong place at the wrong time, I'm just hoping that you can help me out 'cause I have a homie that was there. He was in the situation and he said that I didn't do anything.

My birthday is coming in four days, I just hope I get out then, to be with my family and stuff you know? I just hope you support me. Thanks!

-Juan

From The Beat: We read a lot of pieces about being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Is there anything you can learn from this experience so that you can avoid the wrong people and the wrong places and the wrong times in the future?

A Diamond In The Rough

I'm a diamond in the rough
Then to make things smooth, out here on the hustle
Trying to get this loot,
Not trying to die, so I keep my boot,
They label us thugs, some of us just got somethin' to prove,
And some things just a need to survive,
I'm not ready to die,
They calling me a threat to society,
But they don't know shhh 'bout my built-up anxiety,
They lock me up, take me away from my home,
So I can run from the grouper, to the street that I roam
So I can come back and become a paycheck
I hit you next week 'cause Pancho ain't done yet...

-Pancho

From The Beat: We know what THEY call you, but how do you see yourself? You mentioned your "built-up anxiety," but didn't do any explaining. How can you direct that anxiety away from the behavior that leads "them" to make negative labels to attach to you? How can you become a paycheck for yourself without turning yourself into a commodity for the system to make money off you?

Midget Mac

'Sup Beat? This Kidd aka Midget Mac baby face! Yeah, just here chillin', waitin' to see when I get out this thang. Damn! Do you know what I hate a lot? That there's hella fakes in the unit. I don't care who's reading this, but I'm just saying what's real — wanna be's! Too many wanna be's! But it's all goodie.

Finna go to the grouper for seven months. I don't know about knocking it out though.. Finna be out this thang maybe by my birthday on December 29th. It's finna be cracking. All right then.

Late.

-Lil' Kidd

From The Beat: We're not sure we understand you. If you're on your way to a grouper, how can you be planning to have a cracking birthday party? We hope you're not planning to run, because you'll only be running back into this big bad place. Anyway, hope you had a happy birthday!

Blazing

My momma said I'm crazy
And my girls said I'm amazing
But I don't listen to no lady
Bu the one said I'm hot
But I said, "No, girl,"
I'm blazing!"

-Young Rell

From The Beat: It's too bad your blaze is confined behind these walls! How much truth is there in what your momma said, and to what extent does that keep you confined?

Don't Test Me!

What's happenin' with The Beat? You know this boy CB. I'm at this Ranch thang, doing my thug thang. And dude tried to run up, so I shut him up, ya dig? He was speakin' on the homies, so I had to break his shhh. And you see I'm holdin' it down. I'm a be back. The system can't hold me down, ya dig? I'm gone.

-Cb

From The Beat: Our prisons are stuffed to the max with people who thought the system couldn't hold them down. If you believe — while you're in jail — that you can keep doing what you do (going off on others, for example) without facing ever-stricter restraints, then you are not thinking clearly.

'Cause I'm Me

Chea. Yeah, we in this shhh. Ninjas get money on the block, tryin' to get rich. I'm in this thang. Jus' signed up for college, tryin' to touch down an' 'cause hell, ya know? My ninjas in the streets gettin' it by any means necessary. An' ninjas sho' like to hop in this Beat, talkin' like they 'bout it. Talk all they do—talk all the big dawg shhh in The Beat, an' as soon as shhh start goin' bad fo' ah ninja, then he get back to the sucka shhh.

Ninja, I'm 'bout that action, been 'bout it, but when a ninja eighteen an' locked up, you got boundaries. Especially if you physically hurt a ninja, they gone' straight try to new charge a ninja. But my last fight was in the halls. ya dig? I keep my shhh on the low. I'm really YND (young an' disrespectful).

-Young D

From The Beat: Maybe it's time to focus less on others, even if they're fronting, and more on your own situation, and what you want out of life. It appears to us from what you've written, that you want more of the same as what you have, since you're down for more of the same that got you here. Are we wrong? If so, tell us what you plan to change on the outs so that you can change the consequences and stay free. (By the way, we had to take out some of your references since they either named a clique or referred to initials we do not recognize, and therefore, cannot use.)

To Forgive

What's cracking Beat it's your homeboy coming out of San Jose. Anyways, the topic I am about to write about is to forgive.

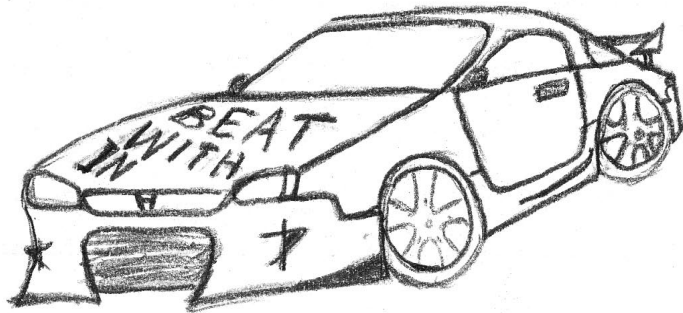
I forgave my lady because she cheated on me in the past with some vato (guy). But I forgave her because she said she wasn't going to do it again. But I regret forgiving her because I have a feeling again.

This is what I think, once a girl cheats, she will always cheat. But it's whatever, like right now since I am in the hall, I think my girl is cheating on me. It's cool 'cause you know what, my family always told me there are plenty of fish out in the sea.

My version is there are plenty of guys out in the sea. But other than that I'm going to get out in three weeks. That's it for this time Beat. To all the homeboys in here stay up and get out. This is the homeboy M and I'm out. Late.

-M

From The Beat: It sounds like it is very hard for you to trust her again, which is normal after being lied to. It takes a lot to forgive someone but when you do it requires you to put it in the past. Are you ready to let it all go? If not, then you can search for another fish in the sea.



In Loving Memory

In loving memory of the homie Speedie,
just chilling like a G boy rest in peace
Damn homie this shhh got me
In a daze.

Got the homies

Reminiscing about back in the days.

Look at you now watching

Me from the sky

I can't believe

You left without a goodbye...

Just remember you're with Lefty

And Augie too...

Damn, as I think back, I can't believe that your gone.

You left the family without saying a goodbye

but we love you with all out hearts.

And look you're in a better place while we're still in this living hell, we so call life,

but we'll be with you soon enough.

Hermano (brother) you were as strong

Don't you ever forget that.

RIP Pete "Speedie"

We love you and miss you

One love

-Chuko

From The Beat: This is a great tribute. It is very hard to lose someone you care about and this poem shows us the pain you feel. We hope that with time those wounds will heal. For your own good, don't let the same story that happened to them happen to you.

199 Days

What's up everybody this is Mark from San Jose. Well, I got sentenced to 199 days life skills and when I complete it that I'm going to be off probation. So, when I get out I'm going to try my best to not come back.

Well that's all I have to say for now late.

-Mark

From The Beat: We're glad to hear that you plan on not returning. Do you have a plan? Sometimes making a plan for yourself can help you get back on your feet when you're on the outs.

Change Requirements

Well what's up Beat? I'm going to drop some lines on this stuff that's been on my mind. I get out in two and a half months. I been locked up for a few and a half months. I know in order for me to stay out, I need to make some changes.

I've got a plan and have a job waiting for me when I get out. Don't get me wrong. I ain't never going to put down my paño (bandana). I bang till I reach the sky like a star, but I have a lady that's there for me and I hella love her so I need to stay out and be a homeboy that makes it somewhere.

Change requires effort. I think I can do it. you'll read about me one day watch. Well thank you Beat. I'm out to all stop fighting each other. Do the time; don't let the time do you.

-Sneaks

From The Beat: It does requires effort, something you're not thinking to do. How long do you think you will last with your job while being in the gang? On one hand, you are trying to find something that will help you stay out of trouble; on the other hand, you're still going to be part of something that will get you back in here or it might get you kill.

Learn From My Past

In my short adolescent life, I've leaned a tremendous amount of knowledge. I've also met so many people that assisted making me who I am at this very moment.

When I was just a kid I got manipulated by people, I was forced to do things that I didn't want to participate in. I participated in those things because I wanted to be accepted.

Now that I am older and understand everything clearly, I see now that I was weak and I just wanted to belong and be loved. Now I am a part of a family, which I love and care for until I leave this unfair world.

-Chuko

From The Beat: We are glad to hear that you love and care for your family. It sounds like you have learned a lot from your past. You should use your knowledge to keep you out the halls so that you can be with the people you love back home. How do you plan to live your life now after realizing the reality?

"History Repeats Itself"

What's up Beat? Well I'm going to write about this topic "learning about the past."

History repeats itself. If you remember your past it helps.

I refuse to continue to make the same mistakes. I speeded through life without hitting the breaks. But I've never got. Nowhere and my problems were still out there 'cause I didn't care. So now I continue to recognize my past, I also made mistakes not a life task.

-Anthony

From The Beat: We often realize the mistakes that we make but yet some of us repeat them. What will you do to make sure you don't repeat the same mistakes? You realize that you have made mistakes in the past, but now you have to find out why you make the ones that get you in the hall.

Thankful

My name is Crystal, and I'm going to write about what I'm thankful for. I'm thankful for having my mom by my side. I wouldn't trade her for any other mom in the world. She has put up with me through all my bad times. She never gives up on me. We had our good times and bad times. I love my mom with all my heart. She always has my back no matter what. I look up to her 'cause she's a strong person and she knows what's right. She has always had a roof over my head, and food. She struggled and still struggles.

My dad ain't around but I really don't care 'cause he used to treat my mom bad, and he tells lies. My mom has me and my brother, plus the family.

Well, I could go on for days about my mom, but these are some reasons why I'm so thankful to have a mom like her. And I love her cooking, especially her rice.

Well, that's it for now. To everybody facing hard time: keep your head up and never regret anything, 'cause it's exactly what you wanted at one time. Just take this as a lesson learned and don't focus on what you didn't do. Focus on what you're going to do when you get out. Much love and respect.

-Crystal

From The Beat: Pretty sound advice. We don't agree with every detail, but it's not bad. We wish you well. We sense you may have learned your lesson.

A Story of My Life

It all started on May 2nd, 2008. I was with my best friend and her sister. We went to the Mexican March, downtown. My friend's sister and I met some people. They invited us to a kickback. My friend didn't like hanging out with them because they were too much drama, but I ignored my friend and started hanging around with the people I'd barely met. I had a brand new iPod Nano that my mom gave me on my birthday, in April. I let some stranger borrow it that I met at the kickback. And he never gave it back.

So I was cool with my friend. I would do a lot of stuff with her. I met her friend one day on August 22. We were going to throw a kickback. It was 1PM. We were on our way to get some bottles, but first we went and stole some clothes. We got caught. We went to juvenile hall, and my friend went home. I got house arrest. My friend got house arrest. She got locked up first, then me. It is our first time here. She left, but I'm still here, waiting to get released.

This is what happens for picking bad friends. Say no to them if they are going to do bad stuff. You don't want to be here in juvie. It is ugly and bad.

-M

From The Beat: That's good advice. Be sure to follow it when you get released.

Love Or Like

I've been thinking Beat, about this saying, and I want to say I think it's so true, and here's the saying: "Never leave the one you love for the one you like. Because the one you like will leave you for the one they love."

It has a meaning behind it and I think people should really think about it. I want to say I know I will never leave the one I love because I am so blessed to have him and I would do nothing to mess that up. So, everyone stay up and do good.

-Jb

From The Beat: Lots of fish in the ocean, (or so they say), but only one is right for your bait. Let's see - where did we hear that....

What's Really Good?

Hey, what's really good? Well, let's see. I'm almost out of here. Yay - I can't wait. I'm so excited. I finally got to see my lil' brother. I'm so happy. I miss him hella much, and hopefully, if he behaves, he'll come home too. I hate to see him at that group home. Well, that's it for now.

-Cristina

From The Beat: OK, that's good enough.

What's Good?

Damn, I've been here for so long and I've missed out on so much - but I've learned my lesson. I have a job and I start school in January. I've learned a lot, as well.

To all you reading this, you really need to stop taking things for granted. Cherish every moment. Life is not measured by the breaths you take, but by the moments that take your breath away, and being locked you lose a lot. I am truly thankful for my beautiful mother who has been there every step of the way. She's my backbone. Without her I would crumble. I thank God every day for blessing me with her. How'd I get so lucky? Only God knows. Well, that's it for now.

-Christina

From The Beat: OK, get out. Catch up on the good stuff. When temptation bites you, tell it to buzz off. You have a life to live, and no time for distractions. Do good. Make your mamma proud.

My Calming Park

Hey Beat what's cracking? Well, the place that I think would be calm is a beautiful park in Gilroy. I love it there. When I'm there it reminds of when I was younger, back in the good days when the streets weren't so hot.

You know, before they made a gang task force, I could just go there and most of the time and forget all the drama. Well, that pretty much explains the place that calms me. Plus it has hella handball courts for all to play bola! Which I know how to play now, so we will see what's up when I get out.

Much love and respect for all those locked up, stay up, and keep your head held high! So for now later, 'til next time.

-Baby L

From The Beat: How did you learn to play handball? Was it in here? See, now you can't say that you didn't learn anything on the inside. Maybe you can write some tips for handball players in your next piece.

Why

Why do we do stupid things?

Why do we get locked up?

Why are we born in the hood?

Why do we gotta look good?

Why do we stay on the grind?

Why is money always on our mind?

Why we always tryna floss?

Why we gotta be the boss?

People always asking us why we like this, and they judge us from being in here, but they aint us

and they'll never understand!

-Melissa

From The Beat: If we knew the answers to all of your questions, we'd be fabulously wealthy. Then we'd take that money and wipe out poverty, and provide good houses and education, and good jobs and health care for everyone. Sadly, we do not know how to answer all of your questions. But we're working on it. You work on it too. Let us know when you come up with a good one, a good answer.

Some Good Things

My life, as of today, kind of sucks. I found out that if my grandparents don't accept me back, or if something doesn't work out the right way, then I may end up in a group home. Not cool.

I miss my mom hella much too. And my little sis. I haven't seen them since before I came in here. But if I talk to her soon, or go home next week, I'll be happy.

Plus, one good thing is I got a letter from my boo, well, my ex, but we still talkin'. I'm happy. Now I'm just waiting for him to write me back. Well, that's it for now.

-Jacklyn

From The Beat: Those are some good things. We hope your grandparents give you another shot at it. If they do, reward them with your best behavior. We bet they've put up with a lot. Now pay them back. We know they want the best for you.

Never Again

What's good? I'm here to talk about what I would never do again, but to be completely honest, there's nothing I've done that I won't do 1 or 2 more times.

Even though I know it's wrong, and know the consequences, I'm gonna test the law, 'cause that's the way I am. I never promised that I would never do anything again, and I will never promise that I will never do something, 'cause that will be a lie.

I don't make promises I don't keep. I live life and I love the rush! So that's why I don't say never and don't make promises I don't keep. Just remember - we don't make regrets, we make mistakes. Life's too short to regret anything.

-Kristina

From The Beat: We disagree with you. When we do something wrong, for instance, if we hurt someone, or cause pain to an innocent person - regret is a normal emotion to feel, after we realize what we've done. Regret may be painful, but it's part of the price each of us must pay for making an avoidable mistake. That you would willingly repeat certain of your mistakes is a troubling thought. Do you like the hall? Does the thought of spending a long time locked away from the rest of the world really appeal to you? What's the story K? Is there really nothing you regret?

Can't Fight

"Stop talking shhh...come say it to my face."

A threat I can't respond to, ever again.

No excuses. I'm lucky that this time wasn't my end.

Burglary, robbery, assault - and why?

I thought there was no other way, but I didn't even try.

Why did I fight her? I can't even say.

Months later - still in dismay.

-S

From The Beat: It's a good sign that you are dismayed by your behavior. Keep thinking. You will work your way through it. You will learn to forgive yourself and you will build your resolve to never behave that way again.

Season Change

As the seasons change, I feel myself becoming like summer!

Every morning as I wake up, there's a smile on my face even though I know I gotta be here for four months.

I gotta make the best of being in a place

I really don't want to be.

I keep my spirits high and try to give off a good vibe to my peers.

-Teriesha

From The Beat: Good for you. When you get out, rent a movie called: Happy Go Lucky. You might recognize the main character.

A Story About Kindness

A thing I remember was something my dad told me. He told me one time he was in jail, and it was Christmas, so he and all the other inmates decided to share their noodles with the ones who didn't have any noodles. So they boiled their things and got a big garbage bag and put all their noodles in the bag, shook them up, and everybody got a cup. Kinda like the ones you drink out of, and everybody got some noodles.

-The daughter

From The Beat: That's a very good story. We hope your dad is doing better now, and that you'll soon be doing better, too.

Nonstop

Days continue to go on

Time is non-stop

No matter where you are

If you are free or locked inside

A brick box

It's hard to see my

My life go to waste

And see my homegirls

With worse cases

Living days and days

Of their life in this

Brick cage

Confined and locked away

With authorities being able

To tell you "too bad,

I'm throwing away the key"

Not caring whether you're innocent

Or not 'cause all they see

Is a kid that needs to be

Institutionalized

With days continuing to go on and

Time will always be nonstop

For you, me, and everyone to be.

-Mary Jane

From The Beat: It can't and won't stop, time keeps running into the future. Thanks for this poem!

Gun Violence Hurts

Gun violence took a few of my homies lives. Some of them got shot and they passed away and the other one was drunk and he was playing with a gun and he shot himself and he passed away.

I have more homies that have past away because of gun violence, but this was just last year. I just want to say rest in peace to my homies.

-Lil' Casper

From The Beat: We're sorry for your loss. How are you moving forward from these tragedies? Has this changed your way of thinking, how?

My Beauty Queen

To my lady, to my love.

She's my angel from up above.

Hopin' that you stay by me through thick and thin.

You'll be my best friend.

Can't wait to see you smile, just once, again.

I hope you're not sad, and not mad at me,

'cause you're my one and only Beauty Queen.

-Vasquez

From The Beat: Good poem, V. Your friend will like it. Be sure to save a copy.

Never Again

Of course I've always promised, like many others, that I will never come back again. But for some reason some of us tend to go back doing the same things when we get out.

Some of us don't have a choice. We were born in it. But I promise myself - this time I'm not coming back, because I can't.

If I mess up I'm going to county now, and I for sure don't want to go there. I've thought long and hard about what I'm gonna do when I get out, and that's rise above all the bad things surrounding me, and put more positive things in my life.

A few more days left here and I put myself to the test. Stay up all Beat readers!

-Melissa

From The Beat: You sound convincing to us. We wish you great good luck and happiness.

My Buddy

My first time picking up a gun was when I was very young. I don't mean the first time I touched one. I mean that's when I started carrying one.

My homeboy gave me a .380, since then, I've had a .45 auto. I carry it everyday, and to me, I won't leave my house without it. Ever since these fools ran up in my house, I've never felt safe, even "home."

I believe in my case, it's necessary. But a lot of other people have them to show off, or talk about having them when they don't.

The gun violence ain't gone never stop and neither will gang-banging. It goes hand-in-hand, you can't have one without the other. My loved ones always tell me to stop carrying a gun. They think I do this for the "fun" of it. But I'm always gonna carry my gun. You can lock me up or take it away, but I'll always protect myself with one.

-Reaper

From The Beat: We can understand that you need protection due to your conflicts with gangs, but we also think that carrying a gun is not necessary. There are other solutions to your problems. There's always a way out. The problem is that you don't want to be helped and ask for help. Talk to your parents. Look for a way out. Carrying a gun is not safe for you or others. Carrying a gun is a guarantee ticket to jail or to death.

Thank You For My Mom

Well hi. My name is Esmeralda, and I'm thankful for my mom. The reason why I'm thankful is because without my mom I would be a no-one, and also, because my mom is always there for me no matter what I do or say. She will always be there for me. So that's why I'm so thankful for my mom.

-Esmeralda

From The Beat: Be sure she gets a copy of your appreciation. It will mean a lot to her.

Back In Time

The person I recognize is my brother Khanh. He gave me many tips, so I don't end up like him. He been through more things then I can imagine.

I wonder what it would be like if I haven't got locked up last year and got to the system. I missed part of my life for something stupid.

-Johnny

From The Beat: This is a powerful piece and we often learn the best lessons from our siblings, don't we? There is still time for you to take those lessons to heart.

Loyalty

Well I'm off topic but this has been on my mind for a while. So here it goes:

Loyalty: faithful; as to a person, ideal, cause, or duty.

Faithful: adhering firmly and devotedly; loyal; worthy of trust; reliable.

Respect: to have regard for; esteem, to avoid violation of.

Trust: firm reliance on the integrity or ability of a person or thing; something committed into the care of another.

This is what so many people claim to be! But turns out they're really not. They're the complete opposite. And I can't stand this. I'm tired of all these fake people, always claiming they're these things, and that's what they abide by, and live up to everyday. But do they abide by and live up to these qualities everyday - do they really? Hell naw, and I'm gonna let it be known, too! I just don't get it? It's like when you get locked up you've all of a sudden changed into this big Christian and you don't want to gang bang no more! Next thing you know, you're chopping it up with the rivals, and you're bunked up with them! What's with that shhh!? You say you're this and that - you're loyal to this and that - but I got just this to say "you ain't shhh!" For real, so stop acting like it.

See, I keep it gangsta, and live by these! It's always been that way for me. Death before dishonor. And to those who can't stand the heat, get out the kitchen!

Beat and Beat readers - I just had to express myself. It's been on my mind for a while. To those who are in it for keeps, much love and respect. Stay up. Be cool. Much love.

-Jessica

From The Beat: Jessica, like you, we believe that loyalty can be a good quality, an admirable quality. We also believe that loyalty in and of itself is not necessarily a good thing. Imagine the racist who believes that people of a different color from his own are less than human. His loyalty to his own skin color is hardly a good thing, is it? Imagine the Nazi who hated "gypsies", and Jews, and gay people. His loyalty to Hitler, the biggest "hater" of all time, is hardly a good thing, is it? So, it very much matters what one is loyal to. There are lots of very good people, maybe even your parents and relatives (we don't know that for sure) who believe that loyalty to a gang is misplaced loyalty. We honor your capacity to be loyal and true, but we urge you to reconsider the issue with this in mind: who deserves loyalty - which organizations and groups deserve loyalty? People and groups have to earn loyalty, by being good and decent, and kind and helpful. Please, think a whole lot more about this. And let us know if what we've said makes any sense.

My Grandma

What's up Beat, this is Gabriel.

My grandma died of breast cancer in 2004 and I was really close to her.

She was like another mother to me so when people talk about her that gets me really mad.

One time I got kicked out of school for fighting 'cause some guy said some thing about her.

-Gabriel

From The Beat: It's hard to hear our peers belittle the one's we love but sometimes we have to restrain ourselves and know that they have no idea what they're talking about. You knew your grandmother, Gabriel, and we're sure that she would have never wanted to see her grandson fighting. Be strong, there are other ways to honor her memory.

Weird Foods

My grandma makes all kinds of Mexican food. She is like a chef basically. She cooks menudo, posale, carne asada, mole, tamales, and my all time favorite food enchiladas y arroz cun frijoles.

-L

From The Beat: You call that weird food? That sounds very tasty!

Never Take Anything Back

Well, I want to say I hope everybody is in great spirits and health at least. Well it's me Nena once again, dropping a few lines.

Well, to be honest I wouldn't have been where I am today if it weren't for my past. Yeah, I think sometimes about stuff I regret, but I would never take anything back, from people in my life, to places that I experienced. I went through a lot, and I'm pretty much happy on what I experienced. I wouldn't be the person I am today. I love myself. Well that's if for now, so yeah. Later!

-Nena

From The Beat: Nena, your positivity and determination to accept your past and your future inspires us, but we believe that you can find space to change and still respect your past.

There's A Place For Me

When there's too much going on and I'm tired and irritated and I just want to get away from everybody and everything. I'll just go home and take a shower and go to my room, shut the door and listen to music and put my phone on silent.

I like to be out and doing my thing, but when it gets too that point when I just want to be by myself that's what I'll most likely do, or hit up one of my boys that I'm really close to, because to me guys are more calm and when I talk to my boy, he's nothing like the girls. The boys are more relaxed. Well Beat, that's all I got for now.

-M

From The Beat: That sounds nice, having a space to just be alone is important to everyone, especially when you think about it from the perspective of being locked up. And you're right, sometimes we need someone of the opposite sex as a friend to keep things cool.

Coke

I regret some things I do and one of them is what I'm in here for.

I came down for a concert in San Jose from Santa Rosa and a cop pulled us over at a motel and the cop asked my cousin if they can search the car and they found coke in a bag. It wasn't mine, but I took the blame so my cousin wouldn't get locked up.

-Lil' Los

From The Beat: Urgh, that is rough, being far from home and dealing with a system that you shouldn't even be in, but what you did was honorable. WE hope you have the power to work your way out of the system once you get out. Follow your probation! Do what is asked of you.

Once Again

How are all you that are in here right now? I hope they're all keeping their heads up. Well, here is an update from me. I'm doing really well in college class and I'm really happy 'cause I am going to be going to school when I get out. I have been out of school for a year and it's time to go to college. I have 45 days left.

I think it's funny how there are so many boys in here that say that they know how to treat a lady and shhh like that, then it turns out they already have one...hmm, I think there is something wrong with that!

Well Beat, I'm going to go, but stay up and be cool to all doing time.

-Babyface

From The Beat: Well, you're almost out and this is the last response we'll be writing to you, so the best of luck with life and school. We'll miss your positive attitude and we know you'll do really good.

Gun Violence in 2008

Gun violence is at an all-time in the year 2008. I didn't really pay attention to the news when they talked about others dying from guns until an associate of mine was mentioned.

Amariae Sanders has been my friend since third grade. We hung out everyday until I moved out of Richmond. When he got to high school his life style changed, he went to Richmond High and I went to Fairfield High.

I heard he went to jail for robbery and I didn't think he was going to get out until December. On Sept. 16 I was watching the news and I heard them say something about a teenager killed in an attempt to rob A & L Posters. They didn't mention any names on the nightly report that I watched.

Sept. 17, while sitting in Spanish class, I got a text message from my best friend. In the message she was telling me that the teen killed was my friend, Amariae. I refused to believe it because I thought he was still in jail. I got another text message from my friend Marvin and he told me the same thing. I called Marvin's big brother because he knew how to get in touch with Amariae's uncle. I gave his uncle a call but he didn't answer. When he called me back I told him who I was and asked him "was my ninja really gone" and he said, "yup he gone." I watched the ten o'clock news that night.

Amariae and a friend of his walked into the store, Amariae ran and jumped on the counter; with no hesitation the owner shot him several times and he was pronounced dead at the scene.

-Black

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear of your loss, Black, we know that death is a hard thing to accept especially when the person was very close to you. Is there anything you would have said to him to try and talk him out of the robbery? How do you keep his memory alive?

Don't Go There

What's cracking, Beat? Well one thing that I think people shouldn't joke or mess around about is your family. I take this very personal because someone is speaking badly on my loved ones. And I don't speak or joke around someone's family because I believe someone else feels the same way I do.

One time at school some kid kept joking about "moms" and I told him don't make any 'bout mine because it's just going to piss me off. But the kid did anyway after I told him not to and I beat him up. It's a pretty severe action but I'm very protective when it comes to my family. Well my times up so got to go.

- Family

From the Beat: Well, we understand your protectiveness over your family but there are other ways to solve your problems. Have you ever thought about using your words instead of your fists to settle a dispute?

The Good Book

What's up Beat and Beat readers. Ima write about the first book I remember reading. It was Dr. Suess' "Green Eggs and Ham".

The first book that ever influenced me was A Million Little Pieces. It's a good book it's about a drug addict who goes to rehab. I'm not finished with it yet. I can't seem to read when I'm out, but I like reading when I'm locked up. It kills time.

-Darlene

From The Beat: Reading books is one of the best habits any human can develop. It really only takes one really good book to start a lifetime habit of reading. You could read for a hundred years and never run out of really good books. What's next on your list?

Piece of the Week

RIP Grandpa

Well today, I'm going to write about my grandfather, 'cause I don't like none of these topics.

Well first off, I want to say rest in peace to him. He passed away May 13, 2008. My grandfather was loving and caring. He was really cool and kick back, but he was also disabled. See, he couldn't really do anything. My grandpa became disabled because he had two strokes five years ago. So then I moved in with my grandparents to help my grandma out with my abuelo. I made him something to eat, and helped him out with anything he needed.

If he had his last \$5 he would give to me, or any of my cousins. He really loved his grandkids a lot, especially the little ones. But I was the oldest out of all. But he still showed me love.

The last time I seen him was two months before he passed away. I just wish I could go back in time just to chill with him one last time, but life goes on and I still pray to him to look over the familia.

Well that's it for now, Beat – until next time.

-Mikeyo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a really powerful story. We see that a lot of young people find their grandparents to play huge roles in their lives. You were lucky to have spent such good time with your grandfather.

Speak Up

I notice that sometimes my good friend gets out of hand and wants to hit things or do drugs. His parents don't really treat him right. He feels that there's no one really there for him.

Me and my friends try to help him out through his hard times. I knew he had been threw some rough stuff, he was addicted to crystal meth. I am glad he let go but he still has to fight the fiend inside him. Now that I am locked up. I don't know who's out there watching his back. Hopefully he can hold his own for now.

-Vtec

From the Beat: Have you thought of sending this over to your friend? This letter was so heart touching because it takes a lot for someone to step it up and say, "Hey, I'm not the only one who matters." You've just taken a step out of childhood and you are now on your way to adulthood!

Get A Job!

Today I'm going to hit ya'll up with some shizz nuts and spit some real game to ya'll. See I'm locked up and they wont let me out. My birthday's around the block. I'm about to be seventeen. If I get out before My B-Day it's still going to suck sweet and sour shhh, the steamy kind.

Well 'bout's the game I want ya'll to soak up on is about to land on ya'll head. Here it go: I be reading all these piece's about how "yeah, I miss my Mom's and I'm sorry." Also "I'm never coming back" or "Damn I'm Back". Check this out., when y'all get out If you can get a job even if it don't pay what you want. Get it! Also, when kicking back with the homies go home at night and stop drinking when you're at a cool buzz....

If you get a job you'll be busy and making money. If you go home at night you'll be at a lower chance of getting rapped up.

Also spend time with the family and it's proving that you'll say out. So for me I'm out.

-Cyclopse

From The Beat: You gave some great advice but do you think that you will end up doing the same? What are you going to do once you get out, Cyclopse?

Dialogue

Elena: Miranda, are you going to be doing a lot of time?

Miranda: I don't want to say yeah, but most likely. I should be out by the time I'm 20, but damn, it's better than doing what I'm supposed to be doing. What's up with you though, how long are you getting?

Elena: Well, I don't know, a cool minute, but it's cool. So, I start trial like in May or something next year. But, by that time, I'll be about almost 18, so who knows. I just might get transferred to Elmwood. And damn, my brother got 25 to life, so what do you think? We'll be going to prison by 2011? Because our situation isn't anything nice, homegirl!

Miranda: Don't trip homie, they can't keep us down forever – just keep positive. Hopefully we will get sent you to the same place. I'll be leaving in May, so damn homie. I'm going to miss you and I've barely met you, but damn we all got hella close to each other, and I know the law is screwed up but we just got to do our time and move on.

Elena: Gracias homegirl. Well yes, we just got to keep our feet planted, head above shoulders and not let nobody keep us down. So, if you hit prison would you have support? Hey, so what do you think about females crying over EMP? I hate them sissy ladies.

Miranda: Yeah I'll get support, don't trip you already know what's up. I got you, and aww homie, the females that come in here for something dumb and they stay crying, damn, that gets me heated because we are going to be down for a cool minute and you don't see us crying. But damn what do you think about them females?

Elena: Whatever. So I'm hella going to miss you, but don't trip. Can't keep us away. Well, it's about that time, so we're going to wrap it up with utmost respect. Well, until next time. One love, we have to hit the showers!

Miranda: All right, well yeah, it's about that time to take it down, well stay up! Don't let anyone get you down.

- Miranda and Elena

From The Beat: This is a pretty interesting conversation you two transcribed for us and it really does get into your feelings about the serious time you are both looking at, but even though you two are so tough you should have empathy for those girls who are having a hard time being in here.

My First OT

My first OT was the third time I was here locked up in Santa Clara juvenile hall. When I was in my room I was sleeping and the staff buzzed in and said my last name and said you got an OT. My OT was hecca cool. The saddest part was coming back and now it's my sixth time here and I had one OT already for Thanksgiving, it was cool. I got to see my son and when I came back my son and sister were crying. I felt bad but its not like I wanted to leave them, I can't wait till my next OT.

I get out February 6th 2008, but this time I get out I'm going to do things right, I'm going to get a job and be a dad. Well that's it till next time!

-Armando

From The Beat: We're rooting for you, to stay out and move on from this part of your life. Your son needs you and we're sure that he is a great inspiration to you. Keep your plans in mind and you'll achieve whatever you set yourself out to do.

Packin' Heat

Us youngster's packin' heat
 Beefing with us, we could put you to sleep.
 I'm just a young goon only 16,
 Trying to make it in the game.
 Gotta hustle and grind to make my ways.
 I gotta run those streets,
 Gutter pollute the streets
 I gotta get this cheese
 If ya know what I mean

Chorse
 I'm out here grinding, hustling gotta
 Get this paper, never fallin'
 Steady ballin'

I'm out here grinding, hustling
 Gotta get this paper
 Never fallen, steady ballin

I was raised from the gutter
 Goin' thru struggles and pain,
 But I always gotta maintain
 Running the place never to facing the game

Its amusing 2 hear about haters
 Protecting the block due to anger – and pain.

It's just a lil flow I wanted
 To write stuck in this place

-Tank

From The Beat: This is a nice flow, Tanks, but what does it mean to you? Do you think that hurting and violating people for the love of your block and for money is the right or smart thing to do? How could you handle your beef differently? There are other ways to make money legitimately so what could you do to make money in a more safer way, other than selling drugs?

Gun Violence

Where do I start? I held a gun at the age of 8 years old, It was a duce-duce and a shotgun.

I shot a gun when I was 12 in the hood, you know. Just ain't up to no good but its whatever and I was chilling with some homeboys in a stolo and they told me to load up the 45 so I did and we just mobbing around but we didn't see who we wanted but that's all I got today Beat late!

-Listo

From The Beat: You were extremely lucky that you did not get caught riding in a stolen vehicle with a loaded gun, looking for someone to shoot! Where do you see your life heading if you keep going in this direction? Just because your friends tell you to load up a gun doesn't mean you have to do it. Life is all about choices. Sometimes the wrong choice means leaving in a body bag. Think about what you want in your life, because if this is the road you want to travel then you are headed for a short ride.

Jailhouse Newsletter

Hello,

Ya'll know who it is: The leader of yo' life, aka. Mr. Pay me, hittin' straight gas, no brake on these fools, ya understand me? It's Pay Me, ya dig me? I can't wait to get out of this little Disneyland vacation. Yo' boy getting lonely in this thang, man. Anyway it's Pay me, dig it like a shovel.

- Pay me

From The Beat: You certainly seem to be enjoying this vacation that you're on, a little too much, perhaps. But everyone has their own way of getting through a hard time.

Guns Are No Joke

What up Beat, this is Marco. Well today I'm gonna write about gun violence. Guns are no joke, man, they could destroy so many things, they could destroy people's goals.

I once got shot at, I was like five feet away from the shooter. It was me and my brother but thanks to God I got safe and no bullet got me, I was very lucky.

My brother didn't have the luck I had and he got shot seven times but he made it and he lives but he left to Mexico. Well, actually he didn't leave he got locked up and got deported. I don't know any of my friends that I know had never died.

I once held a gun but at the moment that I got it I was scared, it was probably like three years ago and the second time I saw two guns pointing at me and my brother it was like a year ago.

We don't need no guns in this world all they do is kill and it stops people's goals. I wouldn't want my kid to pack a gun nor even to know that there's guns in this world one way to stop the gun violence is by having more police watching the streets, the hoods. If it doesn't happen many will die. Hopefully the gun violence stops.

-Marco

From The Beat: Even though there are others whose only knowledge is about guns that doesn't mean they always take that path. You're a strong person, Marco, for admitting that you do not like guns and that you do not think guns are cool because you are choosing your path instead of following another's. What do you think can be done to stop gun and gang violence?

I Don't Think About It

What's up Beat? Today I am writing about learning from the past. Learning from the past is something that happens to everyone. Some people learn and don't do the same things, but other people say they learn and go do the same thing.

I learned a lot of the things I done but don't really think about them. I just go back and do the same things no matter the consequences are. I guess that's not really smart. I don't really care what people say about that because you got to keep it gangster.

-Stomper

From The Beat: You're going to have to explain things to us better than this, Stomper. You seem to be saying that you have to be a gangster, so you won't think about the consequences, like the ones you're living right now. Isn't that just another way of saying you know you're going to give your young life to the state to be its slave and prisoner, and there's nothing you can do about that! Like we said, you're going to have to explain things better than that!

Me and My Town

Love this place
 Gilroy is the name
 Fame out my game
 Careless what you think
 Knock you out in a blink
 I know what I'm about
 True G's never doubt
 I am just an ordinary guy
 With a solid abstract mind,
 Keeping my time
 Always on the grind
 Shining in my prime time.

-Dopey

From The Beat: This is a good piece. We can really see that you love your hometown. But do you think it's wise to knock someone out because they are careless in their way of thinking? A person will always have their own opinions but it's important to know that your opinion of yourself is what matters most!

Yesterday

Well, the topic today is about yesterday. To me, that means how would I have done things in the past.

If only I would of thought about my actions, well I would of thought about not drinking as much and not giving a what. I messed up and now I have 'till Valentine's Day to really get it together.

My life right now is going good. My lady is having my baby in less than four weeks and I'm gonna be a daddy pretty soon! I'm happy and thankful for her being my girl and baby's mom because I always knew this was the girl for me.

My daughter Aaliyah will be home on the 15th of December.

I got 86 days left and I'm out. I'm gonna handle business now cause I'm 18 and don't want to be back here!

I love you baby, daddy's coming home soon to stay.

To all incarcerated – you guys know what time it is! This is your boy Julio to all who know me what up! I'm out!

My baby will be born before this comes out!

-Julio

From The Beat: Congrats on your new baby, hopefully your girl had a safe delivery and you will all be reunited soon and you can keep your promises. Have you seen your newborn yet? All the best young man!

Rip Leprochaun

I can't believe it's been over a year. I remember waking up to that phone call. Your homegirl on the phone, saying you passed away. That was the beginning of a really dark day. I can't believe the police thought I had something to do with your death. This is just a moment in these dark times to say we miss you. Rip Leprochaun 89-07.

-Reaper

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss and the pain from this tragedy.

9MM

What's up, Beat, this is Abimael. Well I'm gonna talk about the first time that I held a 9mm. I was a very young teen and my cousin let me hold his 9mm and he told me, "You want to blast someone?" I told him no because I wasn't ready to shoot somebody..

-Abimael

From The Beat: Abmael, do you think that shooting your enemies will get you anywhere? Are you happy being locked up because if you head down that road then you'll find yourself back behind bars and it could be permanent. It's never too late to change your mind and change the direction your going in.

Listening

Well, one time I should have listened to Friends that were speaking up was when my Girlfriend told me to stop slanging. I always said I wouldn't get caught up, I was so sure I wasn't. But then I did and I ended up here. I always wish I could have really listened and stopped but I was too big headed and didn't listen.

When I get out one thing I'm going to change is that when someone who I care about gives me advice I will always listen and try to do what I believe is best.

-Yaya

From The Beat: It takes someone with strength to admit that they were wrong and didn't listen. Now you can look back on this moment in your life and know that you have grown so much, more than most adults now. What do you think that you can do to make your goal of college a reality? How will you change your lifestyle to stay out of trouble?

Gun Violence Is A Part Of Life

The first time I held a gun was when my homeboy showed me his. He had a .45 and .22. The things that come to my mind when it comes to guns is that they're cool and whenever it comes to use them then you should use them. I believe we should have guns in our lives and communities so we can protect ourselves from danger. I don't think they could stop gun violence and I think it's going to get worse in the future.

-Junior

From The Beat: When do you think it is a right time to use a gun? Sometimes innocent people are killed from the result of someone thinking a gun is cool and firing a random people. Do you think that peer pressure/fitting in has something to do with gun violence? What do you think could be done to keep kids away from guns and instead focused on their future?

The Life We Live

The life we live ain't no joke.

You got to watch where you goin' 'cause you might get smoked,

Slangin' dope to kids, man that ain't the way to go.

Get your money right, homeboy. Slow your roll, you gotta do things right.

Just take life slow, cuz the life we live is all fun and games until you're the one shot and you holdin' your brains, So take a second to think about what you do, 'cause the life we live one second your life could be through.

Don't be selfish, stop thinking 'bout you. Think about your family too.

Now a day in the life we live, all the people think about is themselves and their crew.

You can change, forget what people say cuz in reality those people will trade you for money any day.

Man so stop and think cuz the life we live ain't no joke!

-Guero

From The Beat: This is a beautiful flow, Guerro, and so very true. Not many people stop to think about their peers anymore because if they did then there wouldn't be murders or violence in our cities. We know that this piece will reach out to someone in need of guidance and hopefully they heed your words and open their eyes to what you have said in this flow.

Should've, Could've, Would've

What's really good, Beat? It's me again.

Well, the topic is something that I'm feeling lightweight, so I'm gonna start it like this. Well, there is a time when I would've made a different choice I would've changed the fact that I left the pad to go with the homie from the hood.

If I would've stayed home, I would've still been out. I even had a feeling that something was gonna happen as well as everyone else in my family. Even my girl had a feeling. My aunt told me to be careful like three times before I left and she usually never tells me that. My girl told me to be careful and call as soon as I get to my destination. But a cop called my girl instead, because I got into a fight, talking 'bout if she's my aunt because that's the number I gave.

Now, I'm in here missing my fam and my wife and I'm getting a strike with hopefully life skills. So, that's why I wish I could of stayed home.

To all those on the train with no love, be cool, keep that head up because pain is only temporary. And remember, you can't keep a good man down. Late.

-Johnny

From The Beat: Those premonitions that we have sometimes really need to be listened to, but now you know to listen to your inner feelings.

To Forgive

First, I would like to say what's up to the people from The Beat, especially my girl Samantha. It's funny how they talk about this topic to forgive when I was barely talking about that with the homies up in here in the Max unit. I was talking to them about this vato that snitched on me for some stupid-ass pedo. That's why I'm up in here for some stupid-ass hale that went down a year or so ago.

I would never forget this lil' vato. He could go to hell for what he did. I never thought that I would wish this to him, but life is hard and he messed up by telling on me.

But it's firme one day he would get what he has coming for him. That's it for big temper right now.

-Temper

From The Beat: Why are people who do wrong (as you admit you did) so quick to blame the person that fingered them instead of blaming themselves? The entire criminal justice system, right up to the death penalty, is built on a foundation of snitches. So, if you don't want to be snitched out, don't give the snitches the ammunition they need to save themselves. It's in your hands.

Shot Twice

Well this topic really caught my attention because I've got shot at mi varrio plenty of times. If I can recall I got shot two times.

One time, I got shot at the corner of my hood but never been caught by the bullet but my homie Mousey from my neighborhood didn't get so lucky, he got shot in both legs and I helped him up, put him in a pasisa's car and homies took him to the hospital.

The second time I got shot at was once again in my hood by the freeway. We were having a hood meeting and some dumb vato shot at us from the freeway but none of us got hit. I'm telling you these streets are crazy.

-Darky

From The Beat: Wow, that must have been scary to have been shot at not once but twice. What do you think could be done to stop this kind of random violence? Do you think that kids have taken the love of their streets too far or does the violence stem from something deeper?

Yesterday

Today, we are writing about yesterday. If I had a clock to turn back the hands of time and I would go back to the girl I was messing with and now I supposedly got this girl pregnant and I think it is some BS. So now my motto is: Fear no man, trust no.... So, when I get out what do you think is going to happen?

-Animal

From The Beat: Animal, Animal, your motto doesn't seem to be a positive way to live your life. Perhaps you should soften your heart.

Chillen Trippin

Beat! This is your boy Elmo. Well I came back 'cause shhh went wrong in Unity Care I started messing up, drinking and blazing and so I decided it wasn't really helping me so I decided to cut out.

I was on the run for forty-three days and now I'm in here tripping 'cause my lady got pregnant and yeah my PO is being unreasonable. So I'm gonna make the best out of it and cross my fingers. Hopefully they don't send me to the Y. and shhh.

-Elmo

From The Beat: Congratulations on your girlfriend's pregnancy! We're sure that you'll think twice now before you choose to run away. What do you think that you can do now to keep out of trouble and stay in your child's life? Be strong, Elmo, soon you'll be out and you'll get to experience the wonderment of your child and being a dad that is there!

Life In Juvie

The hall sucks because we eat this nasty food. We can't leave our rooms when we want. We can't shower when we want to. We can't shower when we want to and you always got people telling you what to do and when you can do it. I've lost my freedom being in here. I can't wait to be on the outs again.

-Anthony

From The Beat: It must feel awful to have your freedom taken from you but everyone must take responsibility for his or her own actions. When you're released do you think that your lifestyle will change from the result of your incarceration or will you go back to your old life? \

A Place to go

There is a place for me on the outs, which is with my homey in my neighborhood. I have a place to sleep, food, and people got me on beer and weed. I can go to my homie's pad whenever and if he's not there, then my other homies will be there so I always got somewhere to go and my homie's family are coo' with me going to their pad. I don't bother them, it's firme.

-Squeeks

From The Beat: What about your own family? Are they not there for you in the same way? But it is good that you have people who are so down for you, when you have nowhere to go.

Posole

Posole is a Mexican type of food that would be made on special occasions. Which be a birthday, holiday, or whenever something great happens.

When my mom makes some posole damn! It's hella bomb, I eat about five plates at the most and then fall asleep 'cause I'll be so stuffed.

Posole is a soup with beef and if you want you can put some lettuce and lemon to make it taste better, giving it a little flavor.

-Oscar

From The Beat: Sounds yummy, Oscar. When you have a family of your own are you going to cook them posole?

Carrying Guns

What's popping? This is that Young G coming at you once again from the max. Today's topic is about gun violence. There are many people that have passed away from gun violence, but that's just the way today's life is.

When I get out, the first thing I'm gonna do is get a gun. I'm never gonna walk the streets without a gun 'cause these days it ain't safe. I just had a homeboy passed away. That's about it for now.

-Young G

From The Beat: It's not safe because of guys who carry guns like you. Do you know how many years you can do in jail if you got caught with a gun? And how many extra years you will get if the gun is loaded? Always remember this, "live by the gun, die by gun."

On The Outs

Can't wait to be on the outs with my family. And do whatever I want to do, whenever I want to do. And eat what I want to eat and shower when I want to. I also won't have anyone telling me what to do.

-Anthony

From The Beat: It's hard to listen to someone telling you what to do when you have your own plans in mind. But sometimes it's good to have some sort of structure because it's that structure that helps keep many of us grounded.

My Riches and My Wealth

I'm fly, I wanna fly, I don't wanna die,
I don't wanna get high no more.
They say my heart is stone cold so I don't love or hate
nothing,
I know my faith is hustlin' that's why I'm like this.
They say I'm emotionless I can even seem lifeless
But the gift and the curse that I posses is priceless,
This ain't the first time that I've appeared in a physical,
my father is a genius, my character rose to a criminal.
My life is subliminal,
Inspired by my coke dreams,
My life seem bright but it's as dark as the dope fiends.
Can anybody see me I think I'm fallin', I'm slipping, I'm
balling, I'm dipping,
But my heart went stone cold
I don't know which way to go.
I want to get it back, busting guns dealing crack,
Reminds me of my youth.
I got a gorgeous face when my heart is crying the blues,
I started lying to dudes, then the girls, then myself
Sacrificing my soul for my riches and my wealth.

-D

From The Beat: Wow D, this is a very heart wrenching flow but you know that "all that glitters is not gold". Although there might be people who say that selling dope, doing drugs and packing heat is an admirable way of living, it's really not. In the end, it just makes you a follower and does not get you anywhere in life. What can you do to make your life brighter without the "coke dreams" or the criminal character?

This Hurt

I spent my 15th birthday in the same room and same unit, then now my 17th birthday up in here. Then my second Thanksgiving in the same unit.

It hurts me deep in my heart that I can't be with my family for the holiday. I hurt just being away from my family. I say to myself, man who am I hurting, nobody but my family and I. I changed from the path I was on before.

I'm on a better path that's a good and positive path. I'm trying to do good so I could make my family happy, especially my mother and father who deserve it. I love my mom and dad, and my brothers and sisters more than anything in this world.

-Denny

From The Beat: We're sure your peers in your unit feel the same and we can understand how hard it can be to pull through another day waiting for your release date. But you can use your family as a goal to getting out and staying out and when that happens you can look back on this as a very valuable lesson.

Be Smart

Hey what's up, Beat.

Well, my topic is guns. Wow, how many people do ya'll know that been killed by a gun? Too many to count, right? Guns, for me, is protection. Lately this world be too crazy, you got to be strapped in order to walk around, ain't that some shhh?

Well, sometimes it don't got to be like that, it all depends on the person behind the trigger but lately we been making the wrong choices ya'll got to be smart about it. I know I said it's protection but ya'll, sometimes I think it's nothing, that just ain't right. I'm just saying if you going to have a gun then be grown about it and learn from your mistakes.

-Criscelda

From The Beat: We know how hard it must be to be away from your family but your family is also going through the same emotions as you. Stay strong for yourself and your family.

To be hurt, lost, scared, and broken

Alright, today I'm just writing (please publish this so people can know that the pain they cause goes much further than the surface) I've been hassled so much in this lifetime about being who I am; the valedictorian who is always right when it comes to common sense and education. A man can only tell so much.

Why do you think people die? Why do you think people commit suicide? Because the pain cuts too deep. I know that I will never give pain that satisfaction of knowing that I bent to its will, that it'll get the better of me. Yet I'm still scarred, broken, hurt, lost, ostracized and so many others.

There's a song named "Welcome to My Life". The chorus is "to be hurt, to feel lost, to be kicked out in the dust. To be kicked when you're down, to feel like you been pushed around..." That song describes my life right now.. Everyone thinks it's funny to pick on the smart guy but a man can only take so much. And thank God that I have a very high tolerance for that kind of shhh. Everyone's heard of the nerd that got picked on, then comes to school with a gun. I'm not saying that I have a gun, I'm just saying you don't know anyone until they retaliate.

All my life I've been a misfit, a nobody, someone used for jokes and what not. But the first time I try to show my true potential I get shot down by people who I am superior to.

So here's the message," Open your eyes and think about what you say because it will come back to haunt you."

This pain you instill in me,
Is something of which I will never be free.
You forged your chains, took away my name.
I am but a shadow upon your grave.
You can't see inside of me.
The scars rest there and fester ever deep.
The things your say, the things you do.
They're always there, haunting you.
To be hurt, lost, broken and scared.
My worst memories are always there.
Unforge your chains, give me my name.
You'll find another and let my memory fade...

-Derrick

From The Beat: Derrick, we can really feel how much you're hurting through reading this piece and we are so sorry that you have went through all this bullying. The one thing you have to remember is to keep your head high and to turn the other cheek when someone is trying to bring you down. Everyone goes through hurtful times in their life but you always have the choice of taking the higher path or going down the same road as the people who pick on you. Retaliating against someone with intentions to hurt them would put yourself in the same boat as these bullies. Focus on your life and make sure that you go somewhere because in the long run, you will know who "won" in the end.

Spread, it Does a Body Good

What's up Beat? This is JR, well I'm 'bout to write about the weird foods. Some people think that spread is kind of weird when they see all the different kinds of foods being thrown in the bowl or pan. But when they taste it they get blown away by taste because its hella good. I would put some ingredients but it's up to whatever you got in your fridge.

-Mullen

From The Beat: You're right, many people would think that spread is weird but it's really just a creative way to make not so good foods taste even better. Do you think that you could market spread to a wider audience?

Weird Delicacies

Hey Beat! How you guy's been? Me, I'm cool just waiting to go to the ranch. I'm happy that I'm leaving and I'll probably not be here to read my own Beat when it comes out. Well I guess I'm just going to do my program. I'm about to graduate so I'm happy for that and I'm going to be taking college courses online. Well, my homie just got demoted to B level, right now as I right this.

Well, the weird food thing kind of caught my attention, I don't know or remember the weirdest food that I have eaten. I've seen people eat frog legs and my family ate this weird little bug. I think well I've eaten sushi (the dragon roll) and squid, pig's feet (what Mexican I eat it is also i menudo) I've even eaten duck and tofu. I wouldn't mind eating any foreign food. I would actually like to try everything there is like snake to scorpions (dead one's not alive one's). I want to go to France and try their food because I heard they got some good food, I also would like to eat some Asian food like Cambodian, Filipino, or it doesn't matter. I want to travel and that would be fun just go places and taste food. I would like to get a job getting paid to taste food.

All right then Beat, stay up to all, hopefully I'm gone before the next one. Hopefully I do good. All right then. Alrato.

- Victor

From The Beat: That's a great goal to have, Mr. Victor. There are people who travel just to taste different foods and experiment with different food cultures. What do you think that you would have to do, once out, to reach these goals?

Hoot!

Ever since Monday, 12-01-08, my life has been hoot. I really don't understand how this shhh happen. It was like one day I'm climbing to the top and the next I'm falling, and I'm still falling hard and fast.

This last week of my life has been so terrible. I ain't received nothing but bad news and it ain't getting better. At this moment, my life is unpredictable. All I'm hoping is that somebody is there to break my fall. Real, real soon.

-Papi Chula

From The Beat: Have you ever heard the expression, "what you do in the dark will come out in the light"? We're not sure what is falling apart in your life, but we are sure that you are the one who has to break your own fall. That means you'd better examine your own contribution to your life's meltdown, and take steps to stop making those contributions.

Late Night TV

Sitting in my bedroom late last night in the outs watching TV, looking at a show that was about poker. A player that was playing bet over \$25,000.00. The guy had a trap because the guy knew he was going to lose, he was going to give everything up.

-Ruben

From The Beat: What do you think, when you see a person who throws away money so carelessly? For us, we get angry!

My Dream

My dream is to become president of the US. This is my goal and I'm going for it. I'm going to be the first Mexican president. Well I'm out for now. Stay up to everyone and keep the faith. Jesus loves you.

-President

From The Beat: This is a very high and hard goal to make. People will try to discourage you and put you down for your desire to become President but remember that perseverance and hard work will get you to where you need to go.

How I Think

What's up Beat? This your boy Yung Uso Kefi. When somebody does you wrong and you feel the need to be taught a lesson, you don't always act right then. You play your position, make them get so comfortable with you not reacting. They start slipping because they think you are weak.

Then you react by doing the same thing to them, but you do it in a keener way. The cat won't know what hit him.

Well that what I got for today. Until next time.

-Young Uso Kefi

From The Beat: One thing that would make your writing much stronger would be an example. Think of a sentence that begins something like: "This one time..." then tell us about that one time, to illustrate what you mean. We do have a question though. If "the cat won't know what hit him," then what's the value of the lesson?

If You Can't Do The Time, Don't Do The Crime

Tonight I want to touch on a subject, pertaining to committing a crime and not being able to do the time. There are some individuals that aren't fit to do time. Living the life that we live is an incredibly, roller-coaster type of living, many ups and downs, and many unfortunate incidents.

Real talk, stop gang-banging if you don't want to suffer the consequences. Obviously, speaking in general, you're all aware of the pain and severe suffering that our families go through because of how we live. You know you're getting locked up, you know you might lose your life but you do it anyways. Eventually, your going to do time and statistics prove that our life expectancy is pretty short. Know what you're getting into before you get into it. Expect the unexpected but remain on your toes.

Keep that solid composure and keep your mind straight. Remember what we're intensely striving for. Get your education, get out and stay out. Like I said in the beginning don't do the crime if you can't do the time!

-Pina

From The Beat: We know that a lot of other kids out there will read this and think twice to themselves before they do something they aren't supposed to. Our actions affect more than just us but we rarely realize this until we've hurt the ones closest to us. What do you think should be done to keep kids out of trouble?

My Life

Hey Beat readers! Ms. Jacki'z, putting my two cents in once again. Well, this is gonna be about a topic & what's going on in my life.

So for the "Don't Go There" topic honestly I think the only thing that would be wrong to talk about is their race or their family life. I don't really get offended 'bout that though 'cause common, white girl, somebody's always clowning on me and bringing that up but I don't care, ya dig!

Well, so the lastest with my life kinda sucks. Three months tomorrow & still no sentencing yet so its dead time.

Plus me and my man finally got back together but it going to be a minute before I see him. I'm just hoping I get the sentencing I want. Ugh. I keep wishing to go back in time but honestly I believe everything happens for a reason. So yeah, 'till next time Beat!

-Jacklyn

From The Beat: You know, racial stereotyping doesn't just go for Blacks, Asians or Mexicans because Caucasian people are "classified" also. No one has the right to belittle anyone because of their race and you're a very strong woman for turning the other cheek to your peers teasing. What do you think can be done to stop racial stigmas?

Tonight's Topic...

Well on tonight's topic about guns, the thing that comes to my mind is my hood. I always think when is the time gonna come when I get blasted and pass away or when am I gonna get caught up for murder. Well that's the only thing that comes to mind so I'm gone 'cause I gotta let my mind rest.

-Pancho

From The Beat: That's the thing, Pancho, you don't have to die early. It's never too late to pick yourself up and get out of that lifestyle. Cycles can be broken but it's up to you to make yourself different.

Gun Violence

Hey Beat, what's good? Well this yo' girl Malae just dropping a couple of lines for everyone to read. So yeah, for the first time I'm feeling the topic and I just want to say that I lost my friend this year to gun violence. It really did break my heart, I cried so much and that was the first person that I ever lost that I was close to.

When I seen him in the hospital the next day I found out he got shot in the head, his whole body was swollen and he was ran over by a car full of gang members.

Well, even though he did bad in life he was finally getting his act together and was going to programs to do good for his son. And on his way home he had got shot and ran over.

If my older brother was out of jail it could have been him. I'm not saying I'm glad but I'm saying that I really do miss him and will always love him.

So Beat, got to take it down. Thanks for taking time to read this Beat. Much love and respect, your girl.

-Malae

From The Beat: That is a very hard experience to go through, Malae and we are sorry that you and your friend's family went through such pain. Moving on is always hard but we're sure that your friend would want you to live your life the best way you can. What do you think you and his family can do to remember his life?

Well, Well, Well

Well, I'll be writing a little about myself.

Well, I'll be getting out soon like in two months.

Well the good thing is I'll be getting my high school diploma

in here so it will be cool, dude.

-Chico

From The Beat: We're happy to hear that you'll be out soon, Chico! Although we love your pieces it would be a wonderful thing to hear from you in person rather than locked up. Keep your goals and sight and your hard work will show itself in the long run.

Missing You Already

Well, I just had court and I had to plead guilty to a charge that I didn't even commit. Just sitting there in that chair lying to the judge when he asked you if you are agreeing to this because you committed the crime.

I just busted out in tears knowing that my PO is gonna send me out of state since I got that charge. I have a lot of things going through my head. I wanna be around with my sister and watch her grow and my mom and my man. It's hard to go away for so long. But I know everyone will be there for me that's in my life right now. And I know my babe will be there for me no matter what.

-Lauren

From The Beat: Being away from the one's you love is always hard but you just have to push through these tough times in your life and in the end you'll be a more mature and knowledgeable person. What can you do to make sure that you aren't in this situation again?

Names

Some things just aren't to be joked about. One thing that some people think is funny, but can be taken real seriously is calling someone a bitch that word can turn the conversation from a friendly one to a fight instantly.

I personally hate that word. I don't say that word unless I truly mean to for a reason. It's just a very disrespectful thing to say. It's like another word for a punk or telling someone they're nothing.

-Joe

From The Beat: Being called out of your name is never a good thing and for some, they're answer is to resort to violence. The saying "Sticks and stones can break my bones but words will never hurt me" is not always true because words do have a big impact on people. Although sometimes we're just joking when we call someone a b**** we don't know how that person will feel.

I Was Wrong

Damn, I can't believe

What is happening to me.

I believed that our love was ever lasting

But I was wrong.

I can't believe that I really thought you loved me

And cared about me, but I was wrong.

I can't believe that I really thought I was your one and only,

But I was wrong.

I cant believe I thought everything was going to be ok when you said it would be,

But I was wrong. I can't believe I thought we were meant to be,

But I was wrong. I can't believe I thought this day would never come,

But I was wrong.

-Esmeralda

From The Beat: Lost love is always a painful thing to go through. Have you tried sending this poem to that special someone to let him/her know how you feel?

Speak Up

What's going down, Beat Within and Beat readers? This is Peanut. I'm going to write about today's topic "Speak Up".

My roommate is hella annoying because he gets mad at the stupidest things and make a big ass argument that he swears he's right, but really in the wrong. But I know him from the outs! So I decided to tell him to stop acting like a fool! But we settle it by making each other tap out!

-Peanut

From The Beat: Sometimes we're afraid to tell someone that they're wrong but you took a chance and told you're roommate to stop acting the way he does. How did that make you feel, to have to call him out on his actions?

Learning From The Past

Well, I don't really know on what I've learned from my past. Let me think.... Oh yeah, solving my problems with violence. I once told myself I wasn't ever gonna solve my problems like that, but I did anyways.

Now I'm here about to get sentenced to 35 to life. Oh well. Don't get me wrong, I've learned but I guess the only way I did was the hard way.

-Cash

From The Beat: We hope some other boy, reading what you are facing, will learn the lesson before facing the same future! Violence may have solved one problem for you, but look at the other problem it has created!

My Sentence

What's up Beat? This your boy Young Uso Kefi coming from the max, Today, I'm going to talk about my sentence.

Last week I got sentenced to life skills. But it could have been worse. The DA was trying to send me to CYA 'cause this is my fourth 211.

The first time I got locked up, I did a year and a half. I went to the Ranch and I got into a fight. So I got sentenced back to the Ranch and that took longer to go back. When I went back to the 2nd time, it was hella easy to run, but I didn't run.

This is my 2nd time up in here, and the judge said that I don't have any more chances to go any other place except CYA. I ain't trippin' off going there 'cause most of my usos that locked up that are up in there.

The DA and my attorney, he was just going to sit there and let the DA talk down on me. The DA don't know shhh about me except only paperwork of all the bad shhh I done.

I could get two strikes, charged as an adult when I committed the 211. But I was only 15 years old. If I would've committed two days before, I would've got it.

Well, that all I got for today. Until next time, to all my usos, keep your head up!

-Young Uso Kefi

From The Beat: It doesn't matter how many usos you have locked up in YA, it's not a place you want to be! Your lawyer's job is not to protect you from the bad things the DA says about you, but to protect you from being sent to CYA. It sounds like you had a lawyer who did his job well! But what about your job? If you are so close to state prison (that's what YA is) and to multiple strikes, then you're not doing the best job you could be doing for yourself. Time to focus on some changes that will do you and your future the most good.

Guns Will Be Around

Hey Beat! I think that guns will always be around. I mean if you think about it the most place you see a gun is on a cops belt along with the stick. On the other hand you see mostly gang members with a gun though it's because lots of things happen on the streets so it's for protection.

Other people also use guns for if their houses get robbed. So basically I'm saying there is many different uses for guns, even though some are the right reasons. Like law enforcement deaths would still happen. This world is horrible but hella cool at the same time. Well, all my creative juices are gone, late!

-Chelsea

From The Beat: Yes, the world can be a horrible place but it doesn't have to be. There will always be a way to end bad things from happening, we just have to work together as a united society to try and stop these murders from happening.

My Family

I just want to go home and be with my family, the only people I ever see is my mom and my dad. I want to be able to see my brother and my sister. I really want to go and see my baby and my girlfriend. I haven't seen them since three days after my baby was born, I think it's a mistake to be away from her for so long.

I don't know when I'm getting out but I hope I get out soon its almost been a month since I've been away from them.

-Roman

From The Beat: You're family misses you as much as you miss them and they are hurting as much as you are. Why don't you ask your family to spend some time and write you letters every once and a while? Writing is a great way of communicating and getting your thoughts and feelings across and plus you get to keep the letters and reread them whenever you feel lonely.

Fresh Start

What's really the business? What's really good, Beat? So I had court yesterday and I finally got my sentence! I get out on my 18th bday with no probation. I'm hella excited. I get to start off fresh without being in the system.

I graduated from high school Jan. 30. A juvie hall diploma but it's good, it nada....my release is a couple days before Valentines day.

But uh ya that's all and that's just an update....until pencil meets paper again. Stay up all...

-Jacqueline

From The Beat: That's great! We know that this letter will inspire other kids to do good and succeed. We hope everything goes well for you!

Food

What's up Beat? This is your boy Dopey coming out the ranch unit, keeping a solid abstract mind. I am here to tell about the weird foods. One of the weird foods I've ever had was maybe goat and oysters, they're hella bomb but it's weird, that's the weirdest. Well Beat, I am out so to all stay up.

-Dopey

From The Beat: Did you know that in other countries, goat is more of a staple than beef or chicken? Do you think that you could convince someone from another country to eat a burger if they thought it was weird?

Gun Violence Killed My Boyfriend

We were together for two years and we were gonna have a kid but I had a miscarriage, unfortunately. I miss him sooooo much, he passed away March 27, 2007. I was in here when it happened so I thought I was going to go crazy because I couldn't do pay back.

-Claudia

From The Beat: You've went through very tough ordeals at a very young age but Claudia, don't continue the cycle. Have you ever tried writing poetry to get your feelings out? There are different ways to vent your sadness, anger, etc. Have you tried starting a memorial for your boyfriend?

To All

One thing to think on, if somebody controls your emotions they can control your attitude. If they can control your attitude, then they can control your actions. If someone controls your actions, then they control your destiny.

You Do The Time, Don't Let The Time Do You.

-Young Uso Kefi

From The Beat: So, does this mean you are in control of your own emotions and attitude? If so, what is your attitude? How will it keep you free (or not)? If "attitude determines altitude," then will you fly or fall?

A Message To Those In Prison

Que onda carnales? How you soldados doing? Hope you guys keeping your heads up and not letting that stress get to you. Pues, I might be getting sentenced in Feb. That's pretty firme 'cause I been here for like a year already and they haven't told me anything about my case.

I just wanted to say q-onda to all of the homies up there doing their pedos.

-Temper

From The Beat: Take some time to read the "Beat Without" section if you want to know how it is to spend years as a slave in the huge California prison system. So many young (and formerly young) men spending so many hours of so many days of so many years saying, "If only..."

No Regrets!

Today I'm going to write about sitting in my room but first let me introduce myself, my name is Lil' L.

Well, I got locked up Nov. 26th, 2007 and haven't seen my bedroom since I was too busy stealing cars and smoking with the homeboys.

We use to drive all through San Jose, it was fun at the time but now look we're all locked up and I'm waiting to do 12-18 months.

I still don't regret nothing I've done and I know they don't either.

-Lil' L

From The Beat: Is this what you want with your life? Getting high and stealing cars for a living? It's time to grow up and realize that there is a bigger world out there and this type of life is not the only option.

The Let Down

When a homie lets you down, your heart stops. You think, "Why me?" And the moment that you're in (juvenile), everything stops and becomes reality. All the alcohol, the drugs are gone, you're sober. You believe that it didn't happen, but you accept the fact that it's real and move on. That feeling of a girl can be replaced, but a great homie cannot. Love you you're my boy for life, be safe.

-Arty D

From The Beat: It must hurt when your close friends let you down. When something like this happens what can you do to try and patch up the relationship? Are you both living a legit life, or are you living a life where betrayal and hurt can re-occur?

Mistakes

A mistake I've made over and over again is fighting. It keeps bringing me back (here). I'm tired of it,

I hate coming back here it's to the point where I don't get to go home anymore I have to complete a group home first. It shouldn't take that for me to learn from fighting.

-Andrew

From The Beat: On the fighting issue you have, what can you do rather than fighting to work out a dispute? Look where this action has taken you!

Never Too Late to Change

Hey Beat! Well, I would like to say that I'm back to change for the good.

I was and tired of living on the streets, breaking the law, hurting people and being on the run. I don't want to live my life like that anymore!

I've been coming in and out since the age of fourteen, I am now seventeen years old and I am glad it finally clicked in, you know?

I got 120 days here and when I get released I finally go home to my dad. I leave in March and I should be graduating before I leave here. I want to go to Junior College to become something. I'm too old for this stuff you know? I'm not gonna keep playing this cat and mouse game with the system. I love my family and I am glad to say I now love and value my life. Thanks Beat, you've always been here so I can write out my problems.

Well, hope I succeed this time and I'm tryna reach out to those who are trying to help me.

-Corina

From The Beat: We hope that this is a change for the better too, Corina and we know that if you want it hard enough, if you work hard enough then you can do it. It is never too late to change because humans are always growing. That's the beauty of being alive, you never have to stay the same.

Learning From The Past

Well, today I'm gonna write about "learning from the past". Well, what I've learned from the past is not to disrespect my family. It sucks when you think that it's cool what you're doing on the streets but what you're doing is hurting your family and sometimes that make your family forget you.

It sucks because when you get locked up sometimes you feel lonely because no one visits you or writes you or anything, just because you were so stupid and dumb to not listen to your parents. Well that's it for today, Beat. 'Til next time.

-Jose

From The Beat: Sometimes it takes something big to make us realize that what we're doing is wrong. Just remember that it is never too late to learn because we are always growing and we are always learning. You're family might be disappointed in you but they will always love you and care for you. Maybe you should try speaking up to your parents and tell them your feelings and concerns?

Sitting and Thinking

Sitting in my cell always makes me think of all the times I was on the outs with my family, thinking if everything's alright with them.

I'm also always in here praying, hoping to get out soon on EMP. Just thinking that they don't recommend something else 'cause really I been coming in and out just for weed and not going to school but most of the times just for the weed.

Sitting in my bedroom late last night always got me praying hoping that I get out on EMP before Christmas to be with my family because my PO, might recommend residential treatment.

Sitting in my bedroom late last night got me praying to the Lord, Jesus and the Virgin Mary hoping I get out on EMP on my court date...

-Ivan

From The Beat: We hope that your prayers are answered, Ivan, but sometimes praying can only take you so far. You also have to try to stay out of these situations so that you won't have to be incarcerated in the first place. If you get placed on residential treatment then what will you do to make sure you don't make the same mistakes again?

For My Lady

Sitting in my room late last night, I couldn't stop thinking about my lady. We've been together for about fourteen months now and she's stayed with me through three incarcerations but I can't stop thinking it's over it this time and that's changed my thinking a lot.

I'm not sure if it's fear of losing her, or a sign of maturity, but I've never had a stronger desire to do well in life.

During my stay I've been working on my GED, when I get released I will be on house arrest for four months and I'm going to get a job and my license to use this time productively.

After this school year I'm going to go to West Valley Community College for two years and then SJSU and if you knew me before, you'd know how much improvement that really is.

I just want to make my lady proud, Beat. Enough of this useless wall of words, stay up Beat, this is...

-Eric

From The Beat: Have you thought of sending this letter out to your girlfriend? You'll never know how she feels about your stay unless you ask and asking never hurts. Let her know that she's your motivational force to do better. But remember, Eric, that you have to also want to do better for yourself not just for your girl.

G-Ridin'

G-Riding is cool, you do it once, you do it twice then you start doing it everyday, it's sick when you don't get caught up.

Go pick up some homies, hot box, burn rubber and all of that shhh but when you get caught up it's a bitch.

You get locked up and they're just making money off of you. Once you start G-ridin' it's hard to stop but you're just walking down the street and you see a car that you could turn on, you'll be like forget it and the next thing you see is yourself in the back of a cop car. So don't think that by doing it once you're gonna stop because sometimes it's hard to stop.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: Have you ever thought of the lives you effect when you steal someone's car? Put yourself in their place and picture in your mind that it is YOUR car that is getting stolen. Maybe it's a single mother who's car you've stolen or maybe it's a family on welfare who doesn't have the money to pay the pound? Maybe it could be your mother or father or grandparents who get their car stolen. How would that make you feel? Mature up and stop being so selfish!

Going Insane

Sitting in my room late last night watching the cars drive out of sight, I wish the judge could feel my pain of being in a cell going insane. I wish I could go run and play but all I can do is sit and pray, I want to go back to the city where we always post.

I'm going to be here until '09 with my parents paying a hefty fine. I keep my head up and do my time 'cause I was caught for my boy's crime, It's not on him 'cause I'm to blame For putting in work to earn my name. I'm out for now, 'till next week and the new year is what I seek.

-Mousie

From The Beat: We understand the craziness of only being able to see the same four walls over and over again everyday, Mousie. One thing you can do to try and lessen the boredom is to make up stories and to keep writing. What else can you do to make your stay less mundane?

She's My Addiction

She's like the monkey on my back, she is my addiction, Even when I'm locked up, she still plays her position, Through all the pain and misery, she don't know how much she mean to me I've been shot at, stabbed, and almost beaten to death, But this girl is real, she'll be here to my last breathe, They say love is blind, and hard to find, But they never met a girl, quite like mine, When she's around, I feel a rush, Like heroin in the needle, when I feel her touch, It's too late; I can't go back now, I'm feeling for her, I don't know how She's been mine, through the good and the bad, I never meant to hurt her, or make her sad, Them other girls jealous, all they do is hate, But this girl, and me we were destined by fate.

-Reaper

From The Beat: This is a nice poem! It seems like this girl is the one. If you really care for her, what are you willing to do for her. Love is not forever. Love is like plants—you have to water it or else it dies.

Sitting in My Bedroom Thinking Of Love

As I was sitting in my bedroom late last night I couldn't stop thinking about how much I love my fiancé and son. It seems as if I can never get them off my mind. I always think about their smiles or laughs.

I realized that I need to be at home with them. I miss them both like I never missed no other. I feel empty without my new family.

I made some bad choices baby, and I'm sorry I have to be away from you and our son. I know that Ill miss his b-day this month. I promise you, hun, that I won't ever leave your side because I know that you're struggling too and I know things would be easier with me around but don't worry, beautiful, I'm coming home soon and I'm changing my ways to improve our life. Babe, I love you and I'm going to do things right now. I miss you BEAUTIFUL!

-Drifter

From The Beat: We are so thrilled to know that you are ready to change yourself for the better and step out of the world of childhood to the world of adulthood. We know that having a child makes you grow up and for some people, a baby can either make you or break you. We know that you are strong and we know that your wife and child can help you on the way to a better life.

I Got Shot

What up Beat? This is James coming from life skills unit. Well, today's topic is about gun violence. I've had experiences with both sides. I've had one. I even got shot by one. I think that it would be ok to carry one for self-defense.

I lost a homie once, right in front of me and it wasn't that good. But that's why we should be packing.

So yeah my kids, I don't know if they should be packing unless the streets were more crazier than they are now.

-James

From The Beat: We're glad that you've given us your insight on guns, James and we're very sorry to hear of your loss. You said that you think it's okay to carry a gun for self-defense but what do you think about the people who carry guns just to look powerful?

Sitting In My Bedroom Late Last Night...

I was in a critical situation between whom I should trust.

My terrible ignorant, abusive, psycho, maniac excuse for a father, or a scared runaway, abandoning, useless mother who was never there.

My mind was racing, too many thoughts at once... wanted to run, but nowhere to go, wanted an answer, but all I got were lies. Still can't think straight, damn!

Pissing me off.

Didn't need or deserve any of them, but my heart is too soft.

Want to tell them to ef off,

but now that are not what I really wanted.

Mind all of a sudden starting to become clear, mom and dad aren't there any more...

staff in my head

WTF!

Breakfast time.

-L

From The Beat: We are sorry that you are going through a hard life without the support of your parents. It must have been hard for you to put up with all this pain. If you got this far without them, you can do much more and better. Don't give up. You don't need them. Put your feelings you feel towards them aside and start living a clean life. Who can you lean on for support? What's the plan?

Never Giving Up

Seems like everyone telling me to change. Probation, the judge, girlfriends, and family, they're all the same.

I tell them that real people will always care and be with me, no matter what.

I am who I am, and they should accept me for that.

I know I got to sacrifice certain things,

but there are some things they need to accept as part of me.

-Reaper

From The Beat: What is there to accept? To throw your life away? Why not giving a try to what they want you to do or be, if all they want is to see you in a better situation? Give it a try. Stop being so stubborn!

Appearance

Well, today I'm gonna talk about appearances 'cause I don't like any of these topics.

Don't you just hate it when someone judges you by your appearance? By the way you dress some people automatically think that you're gang related, the people you hang around with also. That is some B.S.

For example, I had court yesterday and my public defender was telling me to cut my hair because the D.A. is going to judge me by my appearance. To tell you the truth I really don't care what people think of me! Have you ever heard "don't judge a book by its cover"? Well, I hate it when people do it because the people that judge you don't really know you like how your family does and your homies.

Well, that's it for now, I'll end it here, 'til next week.

-Mikeyo

From The Beat: People are quick to judge, Mikeyo and many of us make the wrong choice in doing so. You will never really know a person until you try to get to know them. We know how frustrating it must be to have a stranger judge you on your appearance without trying to know who you really are. What do you think society can do to change these stereotypes? What do you think you can do?

Late Night Thinking

Well, I was thinking late last night. I was thinking about the girl of my dreams. I was thinking of the only girl that's been there for me through thick and thin. I was thinking about her smile. I was thinking about holding her cute little hands. I thought of how I held her while we stared at the ocean on a hot summer day. I was thinking about the love right after the fights. I was thinking about our anniversary. I also thought about our first kiss on a cold winter night. I also was thinking about how we would spend hours on the phone. I was thinking about our smiles and tears. I thought about the night I asked her out on Feb. 4, 2007 and the day I asked her to marry me. I was thinking of her lips and when we would kiss each other so softly then I would tell her I love her and she would stare in my eyes with the most beautiful look and say, "I love you too, Johnny." I was thinking about how I miss her so. But out of all this thinking, I got to the conclusion that I love her and I ain't ever gotta think twice about that.

This is for you, Rebecca. I love you way too much. We've been through a lot and we're still goin' on strong. Let's keep up the good work, babe! I love you!

-Johnny

From The Beat: Wow Johnny, you must love Rebecca very much to have poured your heart out so willingly. Have you spoken to Rebecca of your feelings? What are you going to do in the future to stay out of lock up and instead stay with your girl?

Give Some Up!

Q-vo Beat? This is Vic coming straight from Gilroy. Well today's topic is "give it all up." Basically, I don't think that anyone up in here makes big changes just because of a PO or a judge.

I think that the people who do make changes do it for themselves and for their loved ones. What do you mean by meaning changes and starting over? There's only so much change a person could do.

I mean I know that many gang members can't stop 'cause we go all the way. But we could change other things like going to school or getting a job. At the same time, we're still going to be doing our thing.

Well to all up in here, keep your head up and do what you got to do.

-Vico

From The Beat: And what are your plans? Are you thinking about changing? Going to school or something positive that lead your life to a better future? What do you mean by 'gang members can't stop? We know many, so many young people have been very stuck into gangs, have gotten out of out it and now living a better and happier life. There is a way out. Don't blind yourself because that's the worst thing someone can do to oneself.

On Late Night Trip

What's good, Beat? It's your boy getting at you with some of my thoughts.

Well, last night I was chilling with my boy, Johnny and just reminiscing of that good life! But I be always thinking about my girl, my baby momma with no drama! But man, I can't wait to touchdown and be with my wifey and daughter.

I just sit and daze off to the future, how I would of ended up without her and live without her. I am waiting to go to another unit.

I got 'til Jan. 30th to really think about how to be a good father. My time is almost up and I am hella happy! My first time getting hall time and I am 18! Been at ranch twice, etc...but anyways, I am gonna fix up my car when I get out and do it big and legit!

To all, handle your business and be gone. Don't cry about your time, you should already know what time it is when you risking your freedom. Don't do the crime if you can't do the time. To all who know me, stay up. I love you, baby and I'll be home soon...!

-Julio

From The Beat: Too true, do NOT do the crime if you don't want to do the time. You've been very lucky for this to be the first time you've been given halltime, but what about when you get out? What will you be doing to try and stay out? Maybe you can discuss this with your girl and she could give you her insight on what the two of you can do to better your lives as young adults.

Give It All Up

Man my PO is literally macking down on me hard. It's getting to the point where I'm pretty much screwed financially for the next five years. I'm so much in debt in restitution.

To me, it gives new meaning to the topic I'm writing about. I owe over ten thousand dollars and as I can recall my dad owed about that much when he first got full custody of me about 10 years ago. He said it took him many years to pay it off.

No doubt I'm not going to give up though, it isn't going to be easy, but I'm going to make it count.

-L

From The Beat: What are you going to do? What's your plan? The best thing to do is to do your best in getting out, staying out, getting a job, and help your parents to pay this debt off. It's your responsibility.

Forgiving is Hard

Hey Beater's, what up? Hopefully this reaches all in the best health and respect! Well, today's topic is about all the people that let me down....

Well, I've had homies let me down before, it sucks but it happens! To all it's happened to I give my all above sorrow! Well back to the subject, I ain't going to talk about something big, just a so-called homegirl that I ended up finding out she was messing around with my ex.

I don't understand how females that say they're your homegirl then 5 minutes later they stab you in the back. Or when they get into some shhh with you and end up snitching. I get irritated with all that bull.

Stay up to all... I pray and hope the best to you all. 'Til pencil meets paper...

-MaryJane

From The Beat: People will do things that are going to hurt you even though they sometimes don't realize it. It sucks but you have to get to that point where you begin to put it past yourself and you start moving on. And the best way to keep people from snitching is to not get into trouble in the first place!

How To Live?

Greetings Beat. This is Eagle coming from the max. Well Beat, I find myself sitting in my cell thinking back on times that I could've made better choices. I might have not ended up here today.

I also try to think of ways to better myself as an individual, but it's hard when all you've ever known is how to take and when reality hits, it's like damn I haven't done shhhh with my life so far except make things hard on myself.

Rascal and me were up late last night just talking about how to live more positive and do something more productive instead of just robbing people all the time, fighting, and drinking. At the same time no ones ever taught me anything else, so I just don't know how and when I see people out there in society talking about how they are struggling with money all this and that.

I just hate picturing myself like that. I prefer doing things the easy way. One minute you're broke, ten minutes later you got a couple hundreds in your pocket (which will only last a day or two) some weed, brand new clothes, and your ready to start all over again.

I understand as people get older, you just stop doing shhhh like that and that's my problem I just don't know how. So I need to start getting myself prepared for all that because by the time I get out, I'll be probably 18 or 19 out on parole.

I'm going to have to do something to make ends meet. Unless I want to go back to my ways, I need to know how to do something for society and myself.

Well that's it for now Beat. I'm still going through fitness, today is Dec.12, and I'm about 45 days fresh into my known habitat. I'll probably getting a couple years in the Y and hopefully not get tried as an adult. But it's whatever now, I can't go back in time, but everyone knows how we get down. My life has been good I can't complain.

We'll I'm out. I hope you take care of yourself. I'll see you...

-Eagle

From The Beat: Hey life is hard, in side and out. In order to earn what you need to survive, you have to work hard to get it. The easy way will always give you nothing and back to where you are. Go back to the beginning of your writing when you are thinking positive. You will need to be prepared when you get out. You're not a child anymore. You're a grown up and if you're thinking positive—don't worry about because that's a good thing. We call that becoming mature.

Sitting in My Bedroom Late Last night...

Sitting in my bedroom late last night there's a couple things that run through my mind.

The first thing running through my mind is my girl, she's always on my mind 'cause I wonder what she's thinking or if she thinks about me. I talk to her every night before I take it down to my cell and when I tell her it's time to go she gets sad and I tell her I'll call her tomorrow but she don't want to hang up.

I know I'm always on her mind, we've been together eight plus months now and still strong. This is the longest relationship I've had, we've been through some good and bad situations but it ends up with a good note after a long argument. Other than that everything is mas firme.

- Tinley

The Beat Within: We're sure that your girl is missing you as much as you do. Try telling her how you feel, you never know what a little openness can do for a relationship.

Sitting

Sitting in my room last night the thoughts that were going through my head were time's when I was out and about with all my homeboys. Shhhh I miss doing a lot of those things like going to parties or BBQ's and all that.

When me and my roommate just chill and tell stories, it takes me back to those days. To me, really it's a way to escape all the stress and problems and going through.

I'm stuck in the max, looking at some years. All this, waiting to see what's going to happen is driving me crazy. That's when I just drift off in my head that's a place where I could be free. I hate knowing that some one else is going to run my life for the next couple of years.

But not to get off topic, other thoughts that go through my head are times with family, times that I really didn't take advantage of. Knowing the things I know now, it's just like damn, I wasted a lot of my time and I still am today by being in here.

I'm going to try to make the best of this, but I guess will see what happens. I'll have to get through all the dark nights, but what keeps me going is knowing there's always a brighter day. Your whole world could seem like it's coming down on you, but really when you look at the bigger picture it isn't that bad.

Well this Rascal is running out of things to say so I'm going to cut this here with much love and respect I'm out.

-Rascal

From The Beat: Yes, you're right! There will always be a brighter day for you. Don't give up on hopes. Do your time. Keep your spirit up and strong. There will be your time to live a life, a different life. When you get to that, you will need to be prepared. There's a life and many more things to experience in this world. It's waiting for you. How does it feel to release your stress through writing?

Last Night

It's the same as every other night.

I sit there and drift on memory.

I always think why am I still here?

I know what I did, but I've done enough time, why won't they let me go?

I've seen rapist and murders get more time than me. So why, why is y'all doing this to me?

-Reaper

From The Beat: We understand your frustrations, but you don't have another choice but to find other things that can help you ignore your struggles. Your time will come sooner or later. Use this time to learn something positive that can help you in your future.

Learning

Q vole, Beat. What's cracking, this is your boy, Dopey, coming out from the ranch unit.

Well Beat, today's topic that I am writing about is "Learning From The Past". Well Beat, I think I've finally learned. Beat, every time I get so close to getting out of this system I always mess it up and make things worse, this time, I am just going to stay positive and get out. I got a little bit of knowledge, I would say, to stay out and if you get time just do it.

Don't turn a few months into years for stupid things. Well Beat, that's all for today. 'Til next time this vato is out.

-Dopey

From The Beat: It's hard to stay positive and out of trouble in the type of world we live in now, but many of us make it through and we think you will too. Just do as you say, stay positive and have hope that soon you'll be out and moving on to bigger and better things.

Sitting In My Bedroom Late Last Night

Sitting in my bedroom late last night...Damn to be honest, I wasn't doing anything but laying down and reading a book because my roommate Young G decided to bail on me and go to another unit.

Now I'm stuck in a room by myself. The only thing that is cool about being locked up is that you realize which homies are true and which ones aren't.

The real ones are rare, but when you come across them you will know. All I can say about him is that he's a true lil' homie.

Well back to when I was sitting in my room last night and reading a book. I kept stopping because that's what I was thinking about. Well to all the homies that are staying solid. I just want to say keep to keep your head up and do your time and get out.

I'm about to head out back to mi casa in the max unit and read a book.

-Juero

From The Beat: So, what's your conclusion? Can the down and solid homies help you stay out of trouble? Can they guide you to a better road? You should also consider thinking about that and other important things, so your life will only improve.

To Not Forgive

I will never forgive someone if they were really close to me and they stabbed me in the back. I had two so-called "homies" do the same thing to me.

First, it was my best friend (homie/best friend like a brother) he messed with my ex and got her pregnant and was telling everyone that I killed the baby but I didn't 'cause I was locked up and the second so-called homie was my best friend. I let her move in to my pad 'cause she had nowhere to live so I told her to live with me.

When I wasn't there, she tried to get at my girl in my room, so the next day I found out and I took her shhh and told her to leave and she did, but me and my ex weren't together so she got with my ex best friend so I kicked her ass and now we're not coo' no more!!!!

-Ronnie

From The Beat: Wow, it's hard when people you love betray your trust like that and even harder to begin the healing process afterwards. You're not alone though, women everywhere have gon' through many of the things you've gone through but you have to stay strong! Learn from this! Don't let these girls get the best of who you are as a woman! You don't have to settle things with your fists whenever a close friend betrays you because you don't want to go down to their level. Keep your head up and remember that you're better than that and when you get out you go ahead and do what's best for you because in the long run, everyone will see who ended up with the last laugh!



Childhood

I miss being young. When I was little, I use to tell my dad, "I wish I were 18, so I could do what I want."

Now that I am 18, I just want to be little again. I wish I could go back with what I know now and re-live my childhood.

When you're a kid everything is so much less complicated. You don't have bills to pay and you don't have responsibility. It kind of sounds weak 'cause everyone has to face responsibility in life and I'm not saying that I wish I wouldn't have taken my childhood for granted.

-Bettencourt

From The Beat: You're right! Childhood is the best phase of human beings. You lived it already like we all have. Now it is time for you to use what you know to continue to live the rest of your life's phases. Keep those memories alive, but keep moving on.

Let Down By A Sucka

What good, Beat? I jjust got sentenced to 60 days hall time. I tried to get out but the judge wasn't havin' it thanks to the D-A. talkin' all that trash. 60 days, can't complain though!

Anyways, I'm going to write 'bout some times fools let me down. Well, up in here my shhh gets let down nearly every night when I don't get mail from the boys. That shhh pisses me off especially when they tell you on the phone that they're gon' write but they don't But I always forgive 'em 'cause it ain't that big of a deal, plus, I know they're busy doing the things that they do.

Another time is when I went back to my boy T.J. and got jumped by the fools that jumped him. My other boy was there and didn't run up to get my back and even out the fight so I told that fool he was a punk and never trusted him in situations like that. We still talk when we see each other and I'll let him know where the party's at but we don't kick it the same.

Anyways, I'm out but what's poppin' to my boy Play N. I'm out with no probation in February so we gon' be tearin' some shhh up. Peace.

-K Mess

From The Beat: We know how you must feel to be let down by your friends but we're sure that you're comrades care about you but they probably don't know how to express themselves. Have you ever tried telling them how you feel? AS for thanking the DA for your hall time, how 'bout take a look at yourself and see why you got those 60 days! WE think it's time to look at you! IN the end you make the choices that will keep you out or get you locked up again.

Forever I'll Be Here For You

What's good, Beat? Well, I ain't feeling the topic today so I'ma talk about my fiancé.

Baby, I love you so much, words aren't ever gonna explain how I truly feel about you. I'll give you the world if that would show how much I love you and care for you and that I will forever stand by your side. I just can't seem to seem to not stop loving you. I fall in love with you over and over again and I'm happy that you're going to be my wife. I will always love you unconditionally forever, there will be a spot in my heart for you. I miss everything about you and your sweet smell. You make me feel like there's no other for me, like there's no other for you. Marissa baby, I love you and Xavier. I won't ever leave your side; I'll stick with you through thick and thin just like you have with me. There's no one in this world that can do the things you do or make me feel the way you do. Forever, I'll always be here for you. I love you.

-Drifter

From The Beat: This is beautiful, have you told this to your fiancé? Just remember that you're still extremely young and you have your whole life ahead of you. Maybe try stabilizing your future before that big step into married life? Be smart!

Leaving Soon ROP

Well I'm in max right now writing to you guys. Well they told me that I might leave pretty soon and I'm kind of happy because I've been here for ten months and they hit me with one year in Nevada (ROP).

Well to tell you the truth, I've been in the maximum-security a few days already and damn I've been stressing really bad 23 hours in the room, and no roommate. Shhh it's really whack. I'm all alone in a cell and it's giving me hell. I can't take it anymore. Let another person look at me wrong and I'm going to go bad and that's on the real.

-Kollmero

From The Beat: Hang in there amigo. We understand that being here is hard, but the best thing to do is not to get into more trouble. You already got yourself into trouble, and you should use that experience to learn from your mistakes. The only way out of here is by completing your program.

Sitting in My Bedroom Late Last night...

What's good with it, Beat? Well, as for me I'm chillin', you know. Anyways, I was laying in my room late last night thinking about my family. Also I drifted into a little dream, pero, I wasn't asleep.

It was cool you know I was chilling at my pad and all my friends were there with me just having a good time, just like them days you know?

I was so happy that I couldn't wipe the smile off my face, everybody was happy also. My daughter was there and she was happy, but then all the smiles went to the trash because my baby's mama came with her family and everything went all bad.

The homies started to bounce because they are the reason I am here and then I heard my fat roommate snored and I came back to this whack ass place. I was sad, pero, I then cheered up because some other homies got it worse than me. So to all facing time, don't let no one bring you down. Much love!

-Lazy

From The Beat: How do you feel about being locked up for your homies? Have you ever told them how you feel about your incarceration? Lazy, there are people out there who will use you and abuse your friendship to their own advantage but that doesn't mean there aren't trust worthy people out there. A friend would never put you in the situation that you're in.

Give it All Up

Well, today's topic is pretty coo' so I'll write a little about it. Well, I'm in a situation that I have to change. Well, not really have to, but I want to because when I get out I'll have a strike and I'll be on gang probation, so for any little thing I'll be back doing a coo' minute. Not only the charges I caught but the one's I got right now and I'm not tryin' to be locked up half my life.

I have two attempted murder charges and damn I hope and pray they will see me through but if I get out soon I'll change the way I am and the way I think. I need to be coo', I want a family and a good job and I'm ready to start my life.

I'm going to be 18 in a few months and I still don't know what's going to happen but I see it as there's people with worse charges than me so I see that as a high for me but if I do get a while I'm still going to improve myself in here. I'm getting my diploma in here so when I get out I can go straight to college and start my life because I know I'm not going to be down forever and as for the unknown, to tell you the truth it trips me out because I don't know what I'm going to be doing in a couple of months or in a couple of years. Hopefully I'm not locked up, I know for a fact I'm going to maintain myself when I get out. Well, that's all for now, Beat.

-Miranda

From The Beat: The unknown is very scary for many of us because when we're facing situations that we don't even know the outcome of, we're afraid of what will happen. It's never too late to be ready for a change, a better change especially. We haven't lost hope for you, Miranda and we hope that you don't lose the faith in yourself. What will you do to make sure that you are on the right path to college?

On All Topics

To forgive...I know there have been times where I haven't been able to forgive and other times that I have. I know the one I couldn't forgive was when I found out about my ex-lady and my ex-homegirl. It ended all bad, my ex ended up throwing up and my ex-homegirl ended up crying and I left to get faded.

Another time I walked in on my homeboy messing around with my homegirl and at first I got hella pissed but then I forgave him 'cause that female turned out hella loose.

I know that there's some things I'm giving up because when I get out I'm gonna be going to school, stayin' clean and bein' a lady that stays outta jail to be there for my man.

I believe that if I don't remember the shhh that happened then it will continue, 'cause that has happened before when I was faded. I ain't tryin' to have that happen again.

A quick update: Well, I am doin' good in my class on the computer. I registered for my classes at De Anza (Junior College) and I have classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays and in March I'm starting at my job. I'm gonna be coming by on the 31st of January and picking up my king, so if ya'll hear honking hella early (8 or 9am) then that's me showing my love.

To my king, be good, by the time you read this I'll be out.

And to all, keep your heads up! Alrato,

-BabyFace

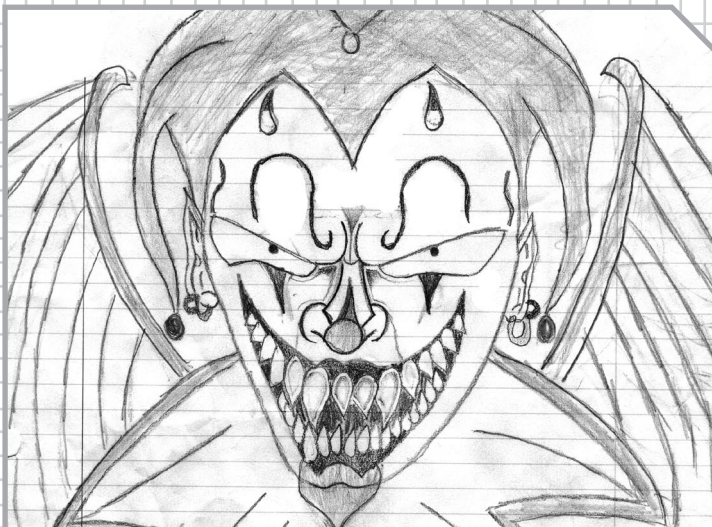
From The Beat: It's great that you're doing so well in your classes, and you're already registering for classes! Relationships are tricky and when you're dealing with infidelity then it gets even harder, just remember that boyfriends and girlfriends will come and go but with each one you learn valuable lessons and you grow so much. You're a strong woman, but you have to do things for yourself also, not just for your man.

Money On My Mind

Caught up in this game it's a struggle
Every day I wake up with money on my mind,
Always gotta hustle, gotta stay on the grind.
Caught up in the system man, it's all a mess.
They think it's a game, they say it's a test,
Staff tellin' you to do this and that,
Man don't judge me 'cause I got some tats.
This system's all corrupt in everything they do,
What you think I'm a change just 'cause you throw me in
a room?
I'll be out again 'cause all I got is time,
Now the only thing I got is money on my mind.
So when I get out, all I'll stack are chips
And try not to get caught up in all this bullshhhh.

-Guero

From The Beat: Everywhere you go people will judge you based on your looks. People fear the "strange" and "different" and sometimes we have to live with it. That doesn't mean it's right but there are things in this world we have to tolerate. We know who you are inside, because we read you're writing and we see the creativity in you. Don't let yourself get caught up into everyone's opinions because the only opinion of yourself that matters is yours. Do right for you and those that love you.



Let Down

Hey what up? This is Smiley coming at you. The only time I've ever been let down was about four months ago. Well, let me tell you the story. ..

It was me and my homies chillin' at my pad at two in the morning drinking. I decided to go get more drink, so I called up my brother-in-law to come pick me up and take me to 7-Eleven.

On our way back from the store we got pulled over for passing a stop sign. The cop started asking me what my name was.

You know how it goes, I was on the run so I gave him a fake name. My brother-in-law told the cops he didn't know who I was and that he was just giving me a ride home from the store. The cops ended up taking me in. The took my fingerprints and found out who I was and now I'm in here. I feel like he let me down. I don't think I'm gonna ever forgive him.

-Smiley

From The Beat: It really hurts when someone let's you down, but it's even worse when it's a family member. Have you spoken to your brother-in-law since the incident? He might have been scared to be with you since you were on the run, afraid that he would also get into trouble. You should try speaking with your brother-in-law and patching up the problem between you two because burying it won't get you anywhere.

Goddamn Fleas!

Well, one day I was drunk as hell and I was with my friends in their squat listening to a song called, "Let's Get Drunk" by Antidote and we were just talkin' about stuff and I went to take a piss so I went to the kitchen and started takin' a piss and I found a kitten and I really liked it, so I got it and went back to the room with the cat in my hand and I fell and I dropped it, but I picked it up again and I was layin' down with it.

My friend asked me if I was going home and I said I didn't know but then I did go home. When I was going home, the drunk started going away and I started feeling this weird shhh crawling on me and I looked and they were freaking fleas! So I just threw that stupid cat and started to take some of the fleas off, but not all of them. I was far away from my house so I broke into someone's backyard and got some funny lookin' bike and went home. The End!

-Jose

From The Beat: This is a very great story, Jose. Is it fictional or based on real life? If this is based from a real life experience then you want to rethink the next time you want to drink excessively. And the bicycle mentioned in the story, would you like your little brothers or sisters bike to get stolen? Or your bike for that matter?

My Mentality

Gang banging is just another causality.

I'm a man with a messed up mentality.

I grew up in a neighborhood
where I was always up to no good.

I still stand tall and refuse to fall.

Where I live, we say funk the law.

If a grown man seen what I saw, he piss his pants.

I got aunts and uncles doing 25 to life without parole.
That's the only life I know, slanging and selling dope.

-Sneaks

From The Beat: Are you saying that you are down to repeat the same story of your aunts and uncles?

I Don't Know

What's up, Beat? Well, I would like to say I hope everyone is in great health and spirits. Well, lately I've been feeling like shhh. I pleaded guilty in my case, man, I gave it all up.

A lot of psycho thoughts running through my head about my sister. It's crazy, this female snitched on me and my best friend and older brother for some bullshhhh ass case. I took a strike, my brother just got out of YA. in the end of May and got locked up then took 3 strikes. I can't even think right anymore.

I try to maintain my composure when my mom talks about her but when I think about it I say to myself, everything happens for a reason. Karma is a bitch and it's all going to come back to her. Then I say, I'm always going to keep myself two steps ahead of the game and no matter what she could never match up to Nena. Well, I got to go, one love to those who got my love.

-Nena

From The Beat: Wow, you are going through very tough times. Family is supposed to come first and it hurts when a family member betrays your trust. Have you spoken to your sister at all since your incarceration? She was probably scared and her instinct was to find a way out of trouble and her way was to turn you, your brother and your friend in. Not admirable but it's to be expected from someone who feels scared and trapped. She will always be your sister no matter what and taking that step into forgiveness is hard but when it's done you'll feel a thousand times more relieved. Try speaking with her or if that's too hard write her a letter. Words can heal a broken relationship or it can push it beyond ruin. You choose which way you want it to go. Good luck, we wish you the best! Remember to focus on your future.

When I'm Out...

As soon as I get out, I'm going to fly with my dad to Arizona to learn how to make fake teeth from my cousins'. My income would be really good for someone my age. 120K a year would be the minimum and that's a lot of cash.

I'm going to go to a community college and then transfer to USF or UCSD. I will go to church and be spiritually strong too.

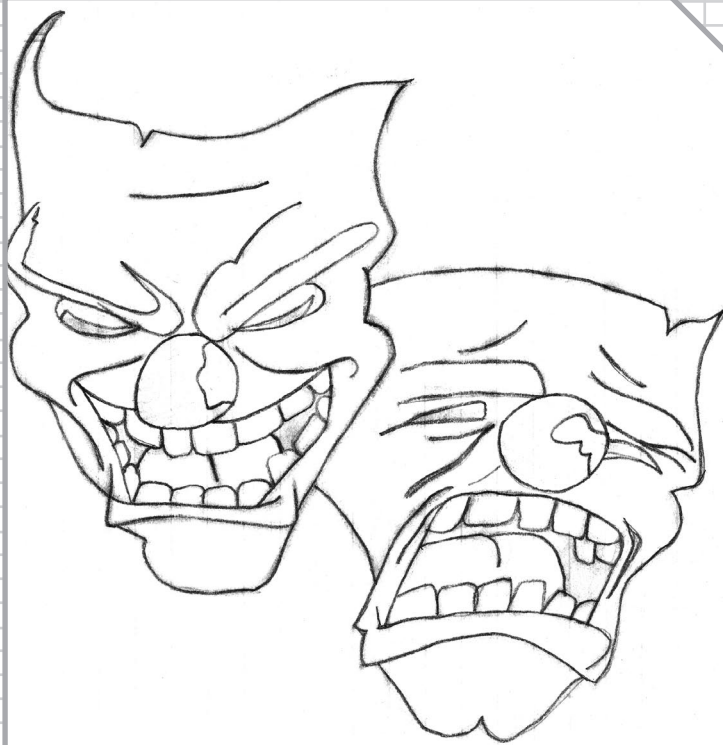
Once I make enough money, I will take real good care of my family. By that time I might decide to become a pastor.

I remember like it was yesterday. I was sleeping in my comfortable king size bed and waking up pretty late and blasting my music with a lot of bass.

I'm always on my computer chatting, or playing games. I would go out and kick it with my friends for a long time, then go home to eat and sleep. At home I would take long showers and be comfortable. Then I watch some T.V. and eat snacks. I will soon get to go home.

-John

From The Beat: Hold those thoughts and make them a reality. You're on the right road! Actions speaks, but fair now we are thrilled about your words!



Breaking Out

I hate being in here,
I feel so powerless
I can't control anything that's happening on the outs.
Missing Christmas was bad enough to miss
so hopefully I won't miss anything else.

I think I'll break out tonight though so I'll be good.

-Cliff the Gift

From the Beat: What do you think will happen, Cliff? If you break out then what happens if you get caught? Break out in your dreams and in your writing! Be smart! We know how you must be feeling right now trapped, scared and anxious to get this time over with but you have to stay strong and stick it out.

Dedicated to Lorena

I love you with all my heart.

Baby I just want you to know that you're on my mind everyday. I miss you.

That's right

Love

Love

Love

Baby I'm your gangster

Yeaah

Reina de mi vida

(Queen of my life)

I love you with all my hart

Ever since the first day

Back from the very first start that

We met

You're so lovely

I had to make you mine

Your breath taking likes an angel

You had me hypnotized

Me recuerdo todos los tiempos

(I remember all the time)

The times we spent together

Nuestro amor sincero

(our sincere love)

I promise you my angel

I'll be right by your side

Me and you por vida (for life)

A love that never dies

I vow on my knees

To always prove my love

Here's a ring with a diamond

Let's unite as one

You know that I miss you girl

(that girl)

You have my heart hasta

Que yo muera

(Until I die)

From now until I die

Baby girl cause I love you

Always and forever

Espera mija dame tu mano

(wait girl, give me your hand)

Don't be sad you're not alone

I love you till death I'll protect you

With my soul

I'm your gangster

For you I will kill

Cementios I will fill with

Hollow chrome or steel

Just a little bit, can't get carried

Away hun, but serio this song is firme.

-Candido

From The Beat: Instead of giving your life away for her, why don't you stay out for her? Nice poem. What about another poem about your life? About your experiences?

Give It All Up

I would give everything or anything up for my son, Andrew, or my mom or little sister. I would give up anything for them because I love them with all my heart. My sister, mom and son are the loves of my life I would do anything for them.

-Armando

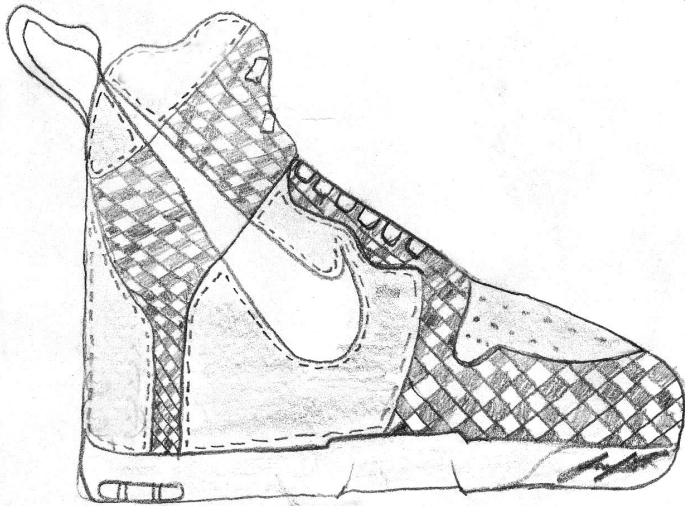
From The Beat: Are you willing to change your lifestyle and the decisions you make that take you away from the ones you love? The greatest thing you can do is be there for your son and for your family. If you are willing to give everything for them, show it.

How Do I Cope With The World?

What it do? Me? Just chilling up in this shhhhhole, doin' nothing, just wondering when the hell I'm leaving this place. I feel like taking my anger out on somebody. Yeah, I'm about to turn 17 in about 9 more days, December 20th and I need to know how to cope with the world, because this teen is almost becoming a man. The only good thing I know is stealing, robbing and hustling.

-Baby Pitt

From The Beat: None of things you know — stealing, robbing and hutling — are "good" things. And the proof of that is where you are right now, having your birthday behind walls! What do you have in your life that will help you avoid all this? Family? Friends? A good future begins with a decent education. Go back to school, and think about what you really like to do (that's legal) and learn as much as you can about it. Pursue your interests, then develop your skills into a life that helps you become happy, proud and free.



Free Marine!

Ahhh, it's now my fourth time here. That's not that many times compared to most of the people up in here, but still, that's four times messing up real bad. I still got 19 days, but I'm probably gonna get less, because my PO wants me out for Christmas, so I'ma get out early on the ankle bracelet.

Damn, everybody's gettin' sent out of placement, and fo' real, I'm already missing one that just got out today. Can you believe that I'm the only girl here? That's not even right. But sometimes it's okay, because I'm out of my room more.

I was put on TRG for 48 hours and I just got off of it yesterday, because a girl snitched on me, saying I had notes and pencils. So a staff member woke me up early and searched my room. She found three pencils, which is funny, because the snitch gave two of 'em to me. That night, while I was taking a shower, my room got searched again, and they found hella notes that I was passing, so that was that. But, damn, I can't wait to get out and kick it with everybody again. Free the caged, all of them.

-Marine

From The Beat: We can't tell from what you've written whether you plan to make any changes when you "get out and kick it with everybody." If not, prepare yourself for the same results as you're facing right now. Sometimes, you just have to take a deep breath and do what you're supposed to do (follow the rules in juvie, don't break the law on the outs), so you can kick it without losing your freedom! By now, this is a lesson you should have learned.

Money And Love

Money is money, love is love. You can have it at the same time, so you have to do what you got to do. So I wish I could get money, 'cause it's power and love is love.

-CB

From The Beat: We all wish we could have money, but getting it illegally only promises handing over your life to a bunch of strangers telling you what to do. The slow and steady way — a legit. job — is the only way to stack your chips little by little. As for love, stop looking and it will find you.

I Need My Ruca By My Side

Ever since I laid my eyes on you, I knew you were the right one. I love, I need you. You're my world. Without you I wouldn't live. I need to stop all this shhh, but I can't do it without you, so please be with me. Don't leave me. I need you. Every gangsta needs a ruca ready to ride by this man's side.

-Baby Pitt

From The Beat: You're lucky to have a female you love, but it's not up to her to keep you free, it's up to you! If you get out and fail to stay out, then she must be less important to you than what you do to get locked up. Yes, she can help you, but she can't control your actions. Only you can do that.

In My Auntie Shadows

My auntie got a loud mouth, always funkking wit' ninjas, ready to show 'em what she about. She don't take no shhh, and her stomach stay full. She go bad on ninjas. I'm wit' her when I'm on, wit' her when I'm sober, bustin' at them suckas won't stop 'til it's ova. I wake up in the morning wit' a murda in my eyes. Click, clack bow bow. Wake up! Surprise!

-J Mak

From The Beat: What's your auntie teaching you except to have a loud mouth and to bust people? You may be waking up with murder in your eyes, but if you take a closer look, you'll see four thick walls and a bunch of boys to share your life with. It might be time to switch up a few things so that you can open your eyes in your own room in your own house!

Another Chance To Show I Can Change

When I first got here I didn't think much of it. I thought I would serve my time and be fine with knowing I'll be out before I know it. Now I feel different. Every day seems slower than the last, and now I wish I could have another chance to show that I can change.

I'm tired of being in here. I want to be out there. I would give anything to be set free. I would stop stealing, dealing, and wouldn't put up a fight.

-Michael

From The Beat: We all mature at different rates, and some of us never mature. But it sounds like that is what is happening to you. You're looking around and seeing the reality of your choices, and you realize you're going to have to make different choices if you want to change that reality. That is maturity. What changes will be hardest? What obstacles will you have to face? Think about them now, so you can prepare for how to deal with them in a way that will keep you free.

My Rainbow World

I like ice cream flavored sandwiches. My Chinaya Lovely loves to knock over forties and lick it off the ground and tweak also. I like to go to stores and steal candy balls that say Pinky on them.

-Pinky

From The Beat: If Chinaya Lovely's habit of getting drunk and tweaking led her to the dog pound, would you let her do it? Your Rainbow World sounds like fun — until you have to pay for it. If Chinay Lovely could talk (and we could understand), what funny or secret stories would she tell about you that only she knows?

Ass-Backwards

This poem is the future becoming the past
Ten minutes ago now
Being born in a grave
Or a baby giving birth
A frog becoming a tadpole
Big Brother in the sky is really on the ground
It's all ass-backwards
But that's life

-Kool Aid Don't Sleep

From The Beat: Have you seen the movie "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" where a baby boy is born as an old man, and keeps growing younger until he dies as an infant? Now that's truly bass-ackwards!

Pee

Peeing is fun. You pee designs on walls or your name. It's plain fun, like riding a bike. Smoking tweak and staying up for three weeks is not fun.

-Pinky

From The Beat: So you're becoming your own special version of a graffiti artist? (Have you ever created your "art" in snow?) You sure know how to have a good time (and, apparently, a bad time, too; stay away from what leads to tweaking for three weeks...)

Ain't No Talk

What's thizz it, Beat? This ya boy still in this weak-ass shhh. I gone talk about ANT. Ninjas always talk, but they not about that action. They always say ANT — which means Ain't No Talk, and they keep talking. They never say it's ANT and start talk. Like these dudes always say, ANT, and they snitch on me. I'm out.

-Ant

From The Beat: Snitching is epidemic in the criminal justice system, from juvy to death row! You can't keep people from snitching, so you either have to stop messing up, or count on spending more time in places like this. So which will you choose?

Snitches Are Fakes

In my 'hood we check our homies by jumping them, because they may let a homie down, or run from our enemies, or back down from a fight. But the thing we don't forgive is that somebody snitch on a homie. We consider them fake and they have to get out of the 'hood.

-Silent

From The Beat: Snitches are everywhere, and there's no way to stop them. All you can control is yourself by not doing anything that you can be snitched out about. For every "fake" you run out of the 'hood, there will always be two more to take his place...

The Seconds Hold Me

My hourglass holds minutes
The minutes hold seconds
And the seconds hold me

-Kool Aid Don't Sleep

From The Beat: You're right—time has you trapped, at least for now. But those seconds just keep ticking away, so don't wait to make changes you know you have to make until the hourglass is empty...

I'll Cherish His Touch

Next time I'll cherish his touch
Because even though it didn't mean much
I'll never get enough

-Marine

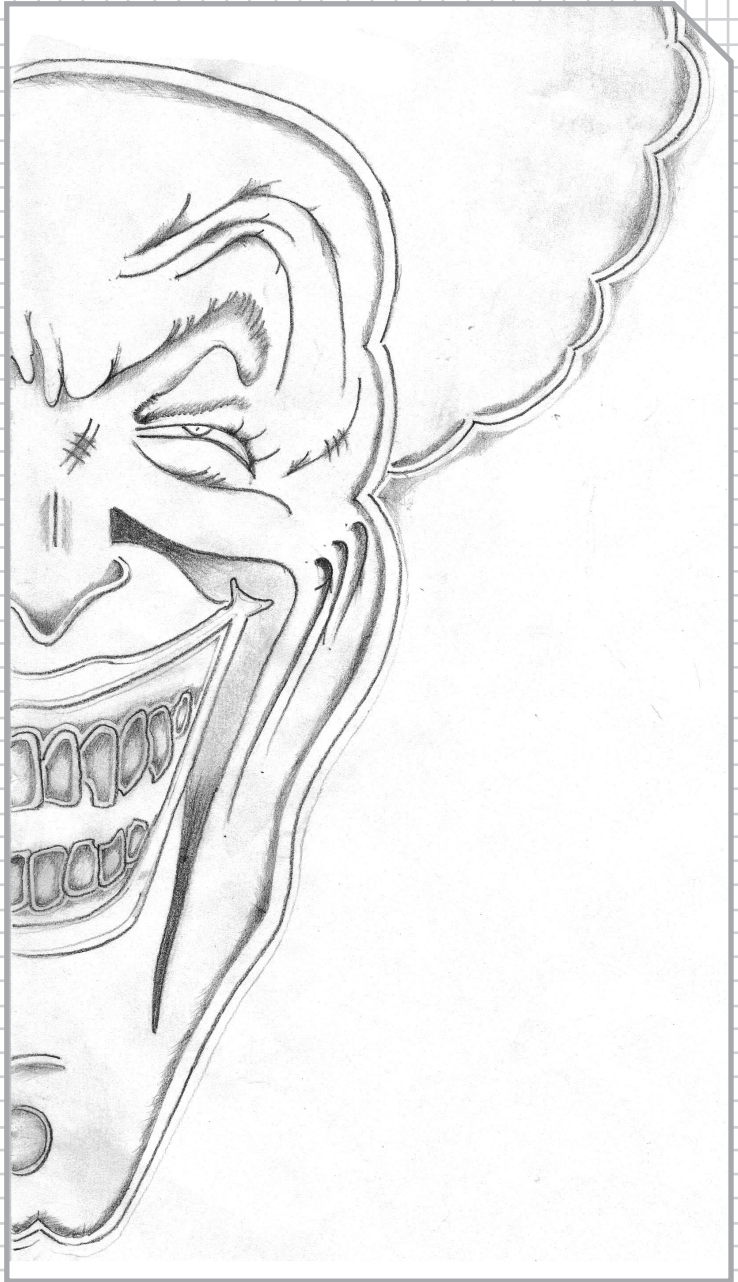
From The Beat: It's not just his touch you should cherish, but your own freedom so that you can enjoy his touch. Will miss him make you change anything when you're on the outs again?

Mi Vida

Mi vida is a hard life. I was born in Mexico and brought to the neighborhood. When I got here, I was raised by the hardcore gangbangers there. They raised me to be a hardcore gangster, and now I'm in juvie. I hope to get out soon.

-Silence

From The Beat: Now that you know that becoming a gangster is sabotaging your freedom and future, what do you plan to change when you get out of here so that you never have to come back?



In My Cell

My cell is hella boring. I can't take being in my cell most of the day, and when we go out we practically do the same thing every day. It just sucks being in here, juvy.

-Oscar

From The Beat: Juvie is designed for you to hate it so you won't ever mess up again and have to go back. Will this work for you?

Being Grateful

The thing I'm most grateful for is my fiancé. She is the reason I haven't given up yet. She made me myself again.

The last time I came to juvie, I lost part of myself but she helped me to find things to look forward to.

Now I'm in juvie again, but I don't mind. As long as she is by my side, nothing can hurt me. I owe her my life for what she has done for me. I will marry her one day.

—Mike

From The Beat: What is it she's done for you that you haven't learned to do for yourself, yet? Don't give up, and don't be in a hurry to get married. You each deserve more time for such a big decision. We're glad that you know how to be grateful. Gratitude and humility are fine qualities.

President Obama

I think Obama is going to be a good president. He is going to make life easier. He is going to help a lot of people on taxes and many other things. He is the first black president. He promised a lot of things and I know he'll keep his promises. But people play the part just to get the part. And also, I hope he'll stop the war.

—Jonathan

From The Beat: Jonathan, it takes more than one person, even if he is the president, to make the kind of changes that will make our country a better, fairer place for all of our citizens. You can help. We all can help.

Worry

I worry about not getting out. I just want to see my family. Every day I wonder what the judge is going to say. I'll do a little bit of time, but I can't do a lot of time. I have to be out with my friends, and my girl. I just hope that they will put me on the monitor. I'd rather be on house arrest than be in this Juvenile Hall. But whatever happened, happened. I can't change the past. This is what I worry about every day.

—Jonathan

From The Beat: Thank you for responding honestly to the topic. And now we want to urge you not to worry about your situation. We want, instead, for you to do something about it. Start by going deep inside and being as honest as you can about the reasons you've found yourself in the situation you now face.

Great Memory

My family and I drove to LA, boarded a cruise ship and sailed to Mexico. On the way to Mexico, we danced and swam in the pool. The food was really good - pizzas, spaghetti, and Mexican food. When we got to Encinada, we got off of the ship. Then we boarded a bus and drove all around. It was a great trip.

—Ronnie

From The Beat: Good, compact description of a 'great memory'.

Locked Up

Being lockup up in J. Hall when you come back to your room you stare at the wall, your family or friends. All I did... just wanted to be the best. I hate doing crimes. I hate doing time.

—Oscar

From The Beat: Sounds like you had a misconception about what it means to be the best. Perhaps this stint in the hall will have given you pause to think about what it really means "to be the best".

Obama

I think that Obama is going to be a good president because he is talking about changing things around. I want to see free education because I think everyone should be educated.

—Melecio

From The Beat: We agree that education is a human right, and that it should be available to everyone.

Worry

Have you ever had to look over your shoulder on every street corner? Hopping into riders with quickness, no hesitation? Having the strain on your brain that you can't tame? Paranoia from watching your best friend get locked up at a young age? Man, I never thought they would catch me going a bill thirty up Hwy. 17, red lights flashing. Pull over.

Nope, nope... not with a car full o'smoke and a truck full o'dope. Thanks for listening, Beat. Peace.

—B

From The Beat: Well, you did pull over, eventually, and here you are. You got a pretty good poem out of your scary adventure. But you put yourself, and others, at great risk, if the events in your poem actually happened. Nah - they couldn't really have happened. No one can go that fast on Highway 17. You've no doubt lost your driver's license, but we'd say that your poetic license is still in tact.

Worrying About Me

Yeah, I'm worrying about what's going to happen in court. Will they release me or make me spend more time here in juvenile hall? Plus, I just want to go home already.

I haven't seen my family in almost a year. I left to go to Indiana, then came back on a Thursday at around 1pm. Then at around 10pm the cops came to my home and arrested me in front of my family. I asked them what I was getting arrested for and they said that my ex-girlfriend said I had threatened her with a gun. That was a big lie. I would never do that to her. I'm worried about my mom, my little brother and sister, my friends, and my new girlfriend.

Yeah, I just want to get out already so I can have freedom to kick it with my friends and girlfriend, and do whatever I want. It sucks in here. I wish I was at home.

—Oscar

From The Beat: Doing whatever you want sounds a bit risky, at least if you want to stay out of the hall. What have you learned from this experience? If you don't want to have to worry about your mom, your brother, and your sister, you're going to have to make some changes. Are you ready to do that?

The New President

I think Obama will be a good president. We'll just have to wait and see. I think he's better than Bush. He has a family and will understand how it is to have a family. So far he's trying to make better laws and decisions. He's on the people's side. He should be a better president.

—Ruben

From The Beat: You're right - we'll have to see how it all comes out. But we shouldn't just be waiting. We should be willing to take part in the changes that are necessary. You are inheriting a world that's been half destroyed by greed and selfishness. There's so much work to be done. We hope you're ready to do your part.

Can't Wait

Well, I have a boyfriend in Watsonville and I really miss him. His name is Angel. Last time that I was with him was all bad. I left with handcuffs on me. He actually didn't see me in them, but he did see me before I bounced. I was supposed to meet him a while after that, but I ended up leaving in a cop car. It was all bad.

I got here a week and a half ago. I haven't even talked to him. That's the sad part. The worst part is that he's probably cheating on me.

Well, OK, but I just can't wait to get out! When I do, they're going to put me on the monitor for a while and I'll be on probation. I have to do 24 hours of community service and go to the evening center. That's all bad. The good part is that right when I get out, I get long hair extensions. Yeah! When I go back home the thing that I'm going to do different is to not run away. I will listen to and respect my mom, go to school, and do everything right that's possible.

I can't wait to get the hell out of here. I swear that if my man is doing stupid stuff ---- I'm not going to deal with it. I don't need that in my life. I don't know, I just need to make better choices or else I'll get nowhere!

-Janelle

From The Beat: Better choices... yes, that's the trick. But what's the plan? Do you know why you made the bad choices? Hard to change unless you understand why you've messed up. Get to the root of the problem. That can be a very painful process, but it's necessary.

Worry Sick Blues

My main worry right now is about my parents. I worry about my parents because I'm not there to protect them. I am also worried about them because I have made them very mad. I don't know what they're going to do without me. I hope they are doing OK.

- Hurt Inside

From The Beat: We hope so too, and we are touched by your concern for your parents. Do what you need to do to get back home. And let your PO know of your concerns about your parents.



Full Of Worry

Yes, I am worried. The thing is, I just want to get out of here. I'm just worried about my family and I'm worried about myself. I'm worried that if I don't get out, I'm going to go to a group home. If I don't get out I'm going to miss my family and friends and my town. When I go to sleep, I dream that I'm on the outs, and then when I wake up, it feels real.

-Ronnie

From The Beat: It feels real for about five seconds, doesn't it? Then the real reality hits you. If you do what you need to do, you won't have to worry how your family is doing. You'll be right there with them, where you belong. Are you ready to get serious about your life?

Changes We Need

We need to have programs that will help families to get good jobs and to help teenagers to stay out of trouble, not to just put them behind bars but to actually help them.

I think every person should get a free education. That would help America a lot because people would gain a dream of becoming something big.

We need counselors that help you, not just punish you. I know many staff people and they don't help you with anything. We need more programs that help us and allow us to have more privileges.

-Melecio

From The Beat: Imagine being in your counselors' shoes. There are so many kids who need help and so few adults available to provide that help. What we're saying is that we mostly agree with you, about the need for help. But it's simply not possible to provide the level of help that is needed with so little in the way of resources. If we had our way, every kid in trouble would have a trained and caring adult available for as long as it took to address the real roots of the problems.

The Beauty Where I Live

Where I live in Santa Cruz is beautiful. I think it is beautiful because of the beach and the women. It is unique because it is not like any other towns. We have a lot of nice sights.

One of my favorite spots is called "The Top of the World". From there, you can see all of Santa Cruz, almost.

Another spot I like is the cliffs. You can chill right there and watch the water. I also like the weather in Santa Cruz. It never really gets too hot in the summer or too cold in the winter. The best things about Santa Cruz, though, are my friends.

-Paris

From The Beat: Lovely piece. Don't let this one get around though, or everyone will want to live in Santa Cruz.

Getting Out

I hate being locked up, even though it's like day care. I can't be here anymore. I want to be with my family. I'm in here with friends but that still isn't enough. I can't wait to leave, well... I'm not really sure if I'll get out, but it's OK. I'm not tripping. I'll get out some day.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: Yes, you will get out someday. But if you don't want to graduate to a facility that is as far from day care as you can imagine, you'll need to make some changes in your life style. And you know what those are.

Changes We Need

We need to have good jobs and to create new jobs. We also need programs that will financially help the needy people.

We need to have more of these types of programs instead of being sent to the hall.

We need programs that would provide a counselor to dedicate his/her time to you, and try to understand what you are going through, instead of just screwing you over in the hall.

-Ruben

From The Beat: Ruben, we doubt that any counselor wants to "screw you over". Each of your counselors has a big job and many juveniles to serve. They're human and sometimes they get frustrated. But your suggestion that each juvenile ought to have a caring adult to work with when he or she gets into trouble is a good one. We know that are a lot of people trying to make that happen. Keep writing and keep talking about what you see. But please, keep in mind that your counselors do want you to succeed. Give them the benefit of the doubt. Most of them are trying very hard to be of service.

Give it all up

All the negativity and all the bad friends those were the things in my life that I let come in. I thought I learned everything I needed to know from them.

But the only place I got me was locked up at the end. And while I'm in here I'm saying, "Man I miss my friends."

The same same friends that taught me all these bad things

But yet their the same friends I knew since I was 13.

Sometimes the best thing to do is let go...

Cause holding on to somethings is trouble, you should know...

And if I continues this way, I'm guaranteed to get stuck...

I guess the best thing to do is "Give it all up"

- Ivory

From The Beat: We agree but we never forget giving something up can be hard. Whether it is not hanging out with friends who always seem to lead us into trouble or if it is no longer doing drugs, we always try to have support so when we start to waver our support system will keep us on track.

Stop

You may get killed before you get your money.

Hurt before they call you honey.

Yeah, I knew this white girl, they called her Snow Bunny and when she got out there on her job, she did it good.

And where she made her money, man was mostly in the hood.

Out there in them hills, could have sworn she was grown.

16 year old making money on her own.

But now that ain't ain't good money, that sh&t is hella ashy

and when you were done didn't you feel hella trashy

Nasty? Me I'm just asking.

Did that make you happy?

Gone head and ask me hell now I ain't no hoe.

Me? I'm just no-no

It is what it is so Hoes you need to stop hoeing

I know this so I'm betting on it.

If you get an STD I guarantee your gonna regret it.

-Dunno me.

From The Beat: Yes, the allure of money may be attractive but the emotional, psychic and physical damage do not make prostitution worthwhile. Don't do it. Love yourself and others. Peace and walk the right path.

Sitting In My Cell

I was sitting in my cell last night and I was thinking about my family. I was thinking about what they are doing right now.

I was also thinking about what they would be doing this Christmas. I wish I was out for Christmas. This is the first time I am not gonna be there for Christmas. I hope they have a good Christmas without me.

I also hope I get to see them soon. I hope my baby siblings don't forget about me. I just want to go home. I was also thinking about my court date. I hope I get to go home by my next court date.

-Danielle

From The Beat: We realize how hard it is being away from your family. Try to be strong and to get through this hard people. Remember there are many people who are not at home with their families. Work to make sure you are home every year from now on. We promise you that your brothers and sisters will not forget who you are.

Friends To The End.

When it comes down to my friends and something goes wrong between other relationships. We know how to work things out when there is our Ups and downs. Yes, we get angry but there's always a kiss and make-up. Now I'm stuck in here. She's not by my side. She would always tell me we're homies 'til the day we die.

-Crystal

From The Beat: Having a good friend is a great place to be. Loneliness is a hard road to walk. We need people and we need to live with others. We wish you the best in hanging in there.

Laughin'

If I stand on tiptoe would you laugh out loud?

If I color your windowsill would you laugh out loud?

If I cry out loud would you laugh then?

Or would you hold my hand until the end?

I woke up this morning exhausted from hiding the me from me.

So I stand here confiding there's more to see than killing and shooting. There's more to life than fighting.

-Cashway

From The Beat: We like to hear that. Until we get real and look at ourselves and stop trying to posture we will never know ourselves. The person that does not know themselves has nothing to offer.

My Sister

Well first of all I want my sister to forgive of what I did and I want her to know that I didn't mean what I did. She made me mad that night but I promise to never do it again and I know I was wrong for what I did and if I had not done it then I wouldn't be in this place right now. But no, I had to go and do it like a dummy. Oh, I didn't mean to hit my mom but she hit me first and I would have walked outside and calmed down but my mom pushed me on the floor. So now, I'm stuck in this dumb place and I wouldn't be if I wasn't so stupid.

-Kathryn

From The Beat: Take it easy. We all make mistakes. We all react in ways that we didn't want to. The key is we have to learn from it. We have to look at our actions and change them. We have to work on it so we do not repeat them.

Friendships

Will, I think friendships are not a good thing because you might not know they will get your back. They might snitch on you. The you will be in here. That's what I think about friends.

I respect my mom. When I'm at home, I cook for her to eat and clean up. But you know when my sister, Nancy, got locked up, my mom came to my sister's court date and not to mine. I feel sad and depressed for my mom because she wasn't there at my court.

I love my mom so much but I think she just doesn't know. She thought that I did a bad thing but it was not that bad. Whenever I have a problem my mom was never there. Whenever my sister had a problem my mother was always there. This is what I always think about.

-Me, myself and I

From The Beat: Sometimes we have ruined relationships that we didn't have to because we got resentful. We need friends and family and we know how easy it seems to dismiss friends and even family rather than working through our issues with them. Relationships aren't easy. They are complicated and ever-changing but we need them. We are social beings.

You Did Me Wrong

Have you ever heard a song
that you like and kept turning it on and on.
Well guess what? You're not alone.

I hope you know better than I show.
I trusted you. I thought you knew what was up.
You to me, were nothing but a screw-up.

There is no "us."
You did me wrong so I wrote this poem.
Explaining why life will go on and on.
I will not ever forget you but will never miss you.

Can you relate to my face?
It's a frown every time you let me down.
You shocked? Well, I'm not, sitting up until 10 o'clock.
Are you coming? Have me wondering?

This relationship was so corrupt. Was it right or was I
wrong?
What do you think when you sit down to read this
poem?

I'll be done with my promising poem.
Life will go on and on. I hope you realize you did me
wrong.

-Wilheasha

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear about your bad relationship. Take all the time you need to heal and work to keep your heart open. A healthy relationship that is respectful of each person involved is a wonderful experience everyone should have.

Harmless Joke or Not

I really don't like it or find it amusing when an individual talks about my family depending on what they converse about. It offends me highly because my family may have seen them as a member of the family. This affects me in the worst way and I'll feel like using force against them. But most people expect me to take it as a harmless joke when in my mind I'm not suited to do so.

The first thing that comes to my mind is to release the beast within and act accordingly. But I try not to express my feelings like that. Talking it out is very important so I don't lose my best friend over four words I could have said "please don't do that" it very simple to me now so we still can have a joke or two.

-Devonte

From The Beat: You explained how to handle this type of situation quite well. It's all about communication and letting someone know that they have crossed the line.

"Lil Brother"

My lil' brother is the light of my life. He's my everything. When they put the cuffs on me, he watched them. Seeing him kick and scream and cry killed me. Every ounce of life in me was taken. Now I see who it affects the most.

I do not want to go through what I've been through. I've promised myself and him that this would be it. No more messing up my world. Everything came crashing down in a matter of seconds. Richie, you're my world. I love you.

-Yvonne

From The Beat: We hope it all works out and this will be the last time you are separated from him but if you find yourself reverting back to your old ways then you need to get honest with yourself and change your ways. You know what you want. Honor those feelings.

Back Then

He was more than my man. He was my best friend. He was always there for me. He understood I was a goon. He knew the whole get down. I ride for him to the fullest. Got down for him and all.

Well I was out getting this paper. He stayed with bread but then he started acting funny. I found out he was creeping so I dogged the bitch. Called him afterwards and told him about it. How I punked her out her phone and stomped her on the ground.

Now I am working at two years for these charges. He had me on speaker in front of the boys the whole time. He was in my life for three and a half years. Hell no, I never forgive him.

-Lupe

From The Beat: Honor and integrity are qualities we all value but we seldom expect them from others. We always wonder why those who have so much to offer seem to not value themselves and give it away to people who do not appreciate them.

"Say No"

Say no to drugs
Say no to sex
Say no to the call outs
Say no to the fall out
Say no to my mom
Say yes to jail
Say yes to the PO
Say yes to the staff
Which leads back to
Say no to the ignorance
Say no to the drugs
which will lead to the fight
then after the fight I need sex
which leads to the tricks
Which is saying "Yes to sex."
When at first I said no
but I really meant yes
because I need the money
So at last I say "No."
because I have no choice
because I said yes to jail.

-Hear me, Fresno

From The Beat: Wow! We hear you. Yes, we say yes and we don't even know we are saying it. One thing does lead to another that is why we walk the line and stay right and we stop and we check ourselves constantly to make sure we are on the right track.

I Never Give up

Go> I'm heading for it
Need> I want it.
Give> I'm going to take it.
Will> I will never stop
Strong> I'm holding on.
Patient> I'm not giving up!
Negatives> Are killing me.
Help> God Save me!
"...Giving up..." Stop!
I'm thinking about it.
"I"
I will never give up!

-Kell'Z

From The Beat: "Winners never quit and quitters never win." Makes sense when we're playing a game but this saying also applies to life. How many times we have thought about taking the day off and checking out but that wouldn't be helping my life so we persist. Sometimes, just showing up takes all we have but then we find once we show up, we find the energy to keep going.

Sitting In My Bedroom

Sitting in my bedroom last night. I keep on thinking about all my family. I feel so messed up because I'm in here and I don't want my little brother and sister to think this is okay to keep on getting locked up. See you're thinking it's cool to get locked up and you tell all of you're ninjas "oh I'm cool because I've been locked up and I'm fresh out."

We'll see. I'm sitting in my bedroom in J.J.C. Well I hate this place. Nothing to do and people telling you what to do. Well see sitting in my room thinking about when I'm going to get out of here. It's not what I want or what I want them to want.

-Amber

From The Beat: We hear you loud and clear but you know kids, especially little sisters and brothers, they want to be just like their bigger older siblings so no matter what you think, you're actions will carry the most impact.

Don't Go There

I really like to laugh. If someone thinks they're funny I like to hear their jokes and see how funny they really are. One topic I could never stand for are "mama" jokes. Growing up I got in a lot of fights over people just trying to tell jokes about my mom. They didn't ever mean what they said but that's a real sensitive subject for me.

-Tim

From The Beat: We agree that it is quite immature to make fun of anyone's mother. The key would be not to lose your cool and firmly let that person know that this kind of joking is not appreciated.

Get That Respect

I respected this girl named Jasmine until she got with my ex-boyfriend behind my back. Once I heard she got with him I was really angry especially because she was like my best friend and she wanted to take pictures and stuff like that. What she really wanted was to get close to him. When I found out and everybody else confronted her about it and we started fighting.

People may ask why I fought for a guy that cheated on me. Well, it was about respect. Ever since that day we were no longer friends because I don't need someone like him in my life. I handled the situation pretty good and just moved on to the good life with my girls.

-Cassandra

From The Beat: We agree that he and she are no longer worth your consideration and we agree that the best thing to do is to move on but you did give her another chance by fighting her. By returning to her to fight her "for your respect" as you said, you gave her another chance to talk and to get her shots in at you. We would not have even given her this opportunity and would have preferred to walk away from both of the. The actions they did only disrespected them. You do not have to do anything to regain your respect.

Life Is Short.

You only live once. Ain't no telling when you're leaving so I'm going to do it all and have a ball while I am still living and breathing. See, I'm a philosopher and my philosophy is this, "Don't be no punk young homey. Take that risk." Anything is possible but nothing for sure. Take advantage of all opportunities and get your money.

-Ohmoddi

From The Beat: Every risk has a cost. Use the mind God gave you and consider the repercussions of your actions. It is important to acknowledge that many people have died in their daring to "do it all." We are all humans living in society. If we do stupid things and get locked up or drive drunk and smash up our car, well it's hard to live life to the fullest when we rest in a box or spend our days in a cell. Think about the consequences.

Paying the Consequences

I had got out and now I'm back. I told myself that I won't come back. Now, I going to do serious time and I pray to God that He takes care of my family.

-Guy

From The Beat: We are very dismayed that young people like yourself find themselves back in Juvenile Hall we hope that this would be your last time and find a hopeful future with your family.

Notice this.

So many things happen in this world yet nobody notice it. There's much drugs, gangs and other things. You wish to change the past but you can't. Sometimes, you want to be Superman but you're not. When you see people die, you just can't get it out of your mind.

You thought you will never in your life see death but then it happens. You wonder why that person had to go and not you. When things go wrong you just want to get away and when it gets worse you just want to die yourself. When your family wants to get you some help cause you shut things out, you don't want their help. When you see something that reminds you of your loved one who just past away, you just want to cry.

Life is so painful that I have to think about my family to keep me alive. A year and ten months going on two years, being here is really making me change. I have until March. People want to say I'm nothing but they don't know me. I'm just another human being like everybody else. Sometimes, I wish life was just a dream.

People don't know each other so they disrespect them instead of getting to know them. I may be locked up. I may be a gang member. I may be a crystal meth user but I am really a good person in life.

-Bethany

From The Beat: You have been through a lot but so have many other people. We all want to be Superman. We all want to be respected. We all feel disrespected. There are times we want to escape and not have to "Live" life but that is living. Life is about showing up and facing our responsibilities and dealing with it. We are not saying it is easy. It can be very hard but it is the best way to live it.

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Everyday I have to remember the past or I can't go on. When I was young I tried to forget the past by doing drugs and getting in trouble because it numbed my pain and made me feel alive. But all that happened was I caused myself more pain by making the wrong choices. Now, I've decided to stop running from my past, to use it to remind me of where I have come from and where I want to go in my life.

I got pregnant when I was seventeen and I made the choice not to keep it. The old me used to do drugs to try to hide the pain. I felt for choosing to not have my baby. But the new me, the woman I am now, makes me remember everyday the decision I made and why I made it so that I know what kind of situation to never put myself in again because if I did end up in that position again I would not make the same decision again. I could not. The pain I feel, the pain I remember everyday helps me to not repeat my past.

-Regretting

From The Beat: We hear you and we identify with you. We have made tough decisions in the past too but punishing ourselves today for a decision we made in the past is not going to change what happened. Punishing ourselves will just make us feel worse so we choose to accept the things we cannot change and to make the actions we can make today.

Doing It The Hood Way

One day I'll be rolling on twenty-fours ..
And getting ghost, off probation with no parole
No sellin' dope and hittin' licks when I'm goin' broke
Just blowin' smoke, no need to worry bout gettin' rolled
But 'til then I'm a do it the hood way
And even when I'm struggling, I'm havin' a good day
I could take the other route and just get away
You need to change, yeah that's easy for you to say
As crooked as it is I'm in love with the West Coast
Done been through a lot in the city of Fresno
To test those, 'cause foo's be bustin' with teflon
With guns big enough to give a bulletproof vest holes.

-Chuck G

From The Beat: It's not easy for us to understand what you're goin' through. Living in the hood means toughening up against life's daily struggles. In the middle part of your rap, you tell us that change is not easy even though some people make it look that way, and you're right. You are a talented writer, and we encourage you to continue to use your words to let the world know about the harsh realities of life in the hood.

Taking the Hits

I was not feeling today's topics, so I'm going to give some words of wisdom to all the people that are feeling low.

Let me tell you something, the world is not all sunshine and rainbows. It's a dirty, mean, and cruel world, and it will beat you down to your knees, and keep you there permanently.

It's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward that's how winning is done! If you know what you're worth, then go get what you're worth, but you got to be willing to take the hits. And not say, "I am not where I am because of him or her." Cowards do that, and that is not you. You're better than that. But if you don't believe yourself you will never find yourself. Peace Beat.

-Nene

From The Beat: Having a good constitution and building a strong character is a good thing.

No Joke

Guns are no joke in this world. Right now by godbrother is resting in peace. I still can't get that vision out of my head. I saw my homie get shot. It's sad. I can't believe it. We were at the wrong place at the wrong time. Bullets have no name, date, and time. A bullet is anyone's. That's why guns are no joke.

RIP Lil Scrappy. We miss you. To all out there locked up, keep your head up. RIP to everyone that is gone and six feet deep. See you next time Beat.

-Lujan

From The Beat: We're sad to hear about those you've lost to gun violence. Guns are serious and can bring devastating results that can impact us for the rest of our lives. Thanks for sharing your story and for reminding us that guns are no joke.

My Solution

I think we need the legalization of Mary Jane 'cause a lot of people are dying because of gang violence. So if people get high, they'll just be lazy and stay home or go to sleep and there will be less violence.

-Vstse

From The Beat: We appreciate your creative approach to reducing violence, but here's something to think about, what are some negative impacts that could result from your solution? Do you have other ideas for how to reduce violence without breaking the law and putting everyone in a stupor?

Finding God

What's up! Man I'm in here just chillin'. I'm getting tired of being in here but I'm maintaining just trying to change my ways and find God. So to all you people, try to find God. It will help you but until then, later.

-Julian

From The Beat: We're glad to hear you're making good use of time your time in JJC. But think about this, did you really have to end up in JJC in order to find God?

A Poem Sister

Pain is more than a word
Pain more than a feeling
Pain, when you are at a down high
Up to the Pen
I felt pain when they told me that my sister went to the Pen
Life will be different by the time I see her again
I feel pain hugging my parents
Knowing I can't leave with them
Why do I feel this pain?
Why can't pain feel them?
As I walk through this hell
Wondering about life
Will it ever be the same?
Life can be lame?
Lord, free me from this pain.

-Brother

From The Beat: Continue to express yourself on paper about your pain it's a safe and a great outlet.

Do The Right Thing

There are hard times when you get locked up. Sometimes you got something going for yourself and then you get locked up.

For me, I found out I was having a baby and then I got locked up. It was hard knowing I wasn't going to find out what the sex of the baby was the next day.

When I came in, it was hard and stressful for me, but I had to do what I could. But if you got something going for yourself, do the right thing.

-Lil' Grin

From The Beat: It sucks when you screw up something good. We all know what that feels like. What happened in your situation? You heard you were having a baby, and then you got locked up? There's probably more to the story, but whatever the case, we hope you get out soon.

Gun Violence

Today's topic's are about gun violence, and I have a lot of experience with guns, that's why I am in here. Some people carry guns because they need protection but in today's society young kids carry gun's to show off or because they think it is cool. But it's not its cool. Some innocent people could get hurt and the teens of today do not care.

Some people say they need guns for protection but they're just afraid to take an ass whooping. I do my thing the old school style, with my hands. But the only reason I ever had a gun is because my family was in danger. Guns are the last thing I prefer. But for all you ganger's and thugs, stop being weenie's and take a beating.

-G

From The Beat: We are quite saddened that all kids do not live a carefree life without guns and fighting. It would be best if we could all strive to live peaceful lives with acceptance of everyone's differences.

Refuse to Lose

First of all I've been locked up for a while and I'm getting tired of this life because there's a lot out there for me. Sometime's in my room I think about my kids and family and how fun it would be to spend time with them. Each time I get out, I end up getting in trouble and when I'm locked up I do good.

I think the street's are just not for me. But that doesn't mean I'm going to keep on getting locked up, because I'm not. My kids and family need me. When I get out, I'm going to try to do good.

But, I'm meant to be in the hood because that's how I was raised. Well I'm going to let you go now that's what I think and know about myself.

-Lil' Kay

From The Beat: No one is meant to be in the hood even if they were raised that way. Continue to "refuse to lose", because your children need a daily presence with you instead of a dad that will be in jail.

Chankla

Well I don't need a gun if someone wants some problems we can get them up. Yeah I remember when the homey had a gun and he let me hold it then he said what's up little homey you ready for that one eight seven I was like hell yah so we got in a car and went to the 'other' side and he gave it to me again and we seen some of them at a park and I let loose on them I seen them falling then I jumped back in the car and we took off that's the first time I hold a gun. No, we don't need a gun because they just hurt people and give my homey's prison time like one of my close homeys they gave him 47 years to life.

- Lil' Homey

From The Beat: What a too-true story. We are glad that your experience with the gun showed you how pointless they are—rather than addicting you with their power. Congratulations on choosing life without guns!

To Be Free

There are always going to be good times and bad times. Being locked up really ain't cool though but then you ask yourself, why am I in here? There's a saying about that goes "you do the crime, you pay the time."

Nobody wants to be lonely. They'd rather be with their family and friends. For me, I can't wait to get out so I can be with my girl and do what I do again. You have the right to be who you want to be and I just want to be free.

-Myke

From The Beat: You bring up some good points about dealing with consequences and being free. Those things are connected, for example, you commit a crime, you lose your freedom—we all know that, but sometimes, it's easier said than done. Keep asking yourself those difficult questions and challenge yourself to think more deeply about the consequences of your actions.

Comfort Foods

The weird foods that my family eats are chitlins, mustard greens, pig's feet and black eyed peas. I have grown up on this type of food and it is good.

My grandma always makes jambalaya, it consist of rice, sausage, shrimp, and a whole bunch of different mixtures. It tastes like one of the best foods that I have ever eaten. My grandma even makes gumbo I really don't know how it is made.

-Anthony

From the Beat: Many of us through our own cultures have grown up with foods that may seem weird to others but are delicious to us. If possible, try to spend time in the kitchen with your relatives to learn how to cook these recipes to keep them in the family.

No Joke

The Streets of Fresno are no joke, because people be pulling out guns. Some people pull a gun out to scare you, to punk you, or to kill you.

I was born in Los Angeles but raised in Fresno and grew up with gangsters with a lot of guns. I was jumped in my vario when I was a young teen.

-Jorge

From The Beat: You are right...guns are a big problem in our community. How do you feel like you could get involved in stopping the cycle of violence?

Gun Violence

The First time I saw a gun was when I was three.

When I was only five I knew what a gun was because my uncle's had a 357. When guns come to my mind I think I can do anything particularly in my community, yes we need a gun because there are kids getting killed and families getting shot at just for colors and money.

The first time I carried a gun was when I was ten, it was a duce five which I got from my brother. Although when I think about it I wouldn't want my kids carrying guns because they might do something that they don't even know they are doing. I believe a way for stopping gun violence is to have kids stop going on the streets and stop gang bangin. I love guns and right now I have my own.

-Knite Rider

From The Beat: You're right; this type of violence needs to stop. There is a huge difference between owning guns and using them in a safe environment such as in a shooting range as opposed to the stark reality that kids are killing each other and innocent lives.

Independent

Independent is what I am! A job can = independence.

If you have money that can = independence.

If you're on your own that is independence.

You should start to be independent because that one person is not going to help you through your whole life. So, yes independence is what I am because I don't depend on no one but my self. I have my own.

-Karissa

From The Beat: We agree that it is important to be self reliant and independent but we realize it does not happen overnight. That is why we suggest getting your HS degree and taking some classes to gain more skills. It is also important not to emotionally rely on drugs, booze, sex, etc... If we do not gain independence we do not give in but continue to work towards attaining our freedom.

Suave All Day

I am a suave person I don't care about anybody but my family or nice people. If anyone tries to mess with me or the people I love I will beat them savagely. I am also a good person. If only you perceive me I will have you saying this guy is really suave. I used to make sure I was cool. But when I lose my cool the suave beast comes out of me.

I want to let people know I am suave at school too! I even want to let the books know I am suave. I get good grades all the time. I want to graduate from high school suavely.

-Sad

From The Beat: For many people being suave does not come naturally they have to be very conscious of expressing themselves in a controlled way without getting angry and hurting people that they love. That is why anger management classes are available for people who want to seek help in learning how express their emotions in a healthy manner.

Looking Back

What up Beat Within? It's ya boy, Frankie the Bandit. I don't really know much about the four topics so I'm going to write about something else.

When I think back to then and now, I would have never thought I'd be the man I am. I've been to JJC seven times. I've been charged with assault, threatening to kill, DUI, robbery!

If I were to go back in time, I'd tell myself how much trouble I'd get into in my future. I wouldn't believe myself and would probably laugh about it. When I was a young teen, that's when drama started in my life. I was locked up for three months and let out on probation. I had to go back to school. I remember saying, "I'm never coming back," but I ended up coming back six more times. The next six were from what doing what I mentioned earlier.

I was ten when I started smoking cigarettes, and eleven when I smoked bud. Then I was thirteen when I started to drink, and fourteen when I started ya yo, heroin, and pills.

Now I'm sixteen, and I'm locked up for a violation of probation. I'm sober from all the drugs except for occasional bud, and I still love to drink.

I'm getting out soon but they are moving me to Madera with my dad. It was that or a group home.

I'm out of time so to all locked up, stay up, keep ya chin up, and always try to do good with your life. This is ya boy, signing off.

-Frankie

From The Beat: It's funny when we look back on our life and wish we could have acted differently. If only we could have known that so much trouble was going to come our way, we might have thought twice about our actions. But we don't know what the future holds. All we can do is try our best each day and hope for positive things. Do you think all the drama and craziness you've been through so far will help you make better decisions in the future?

Chance To Change

I can't wait to get out because I'm tired of this life in here. I'd rather be with my family, that's what matters most to me.

If I had the chance to change, I would take it for only two reasons, my family and I, for sure. When there comes a time to chose between life or death, it's simple, you're going to chose life anytime. But what if there was no time to think?

That's why you should always think twice before doing what others want you to do. Only God will judge me for what I've done in my life! I'm going to do what I do best, don't trip though, I'll be out soon, gone!

-Myke

From The Beat: We want you to know you DO have the chance to change, and we hope you take it for the two reasons you point out, for your family and for yourself. So next time, think about the consequences of your actions, and choose the route that will help you change your life for the better.

Hurt

Sitting in my bedroom last night, I was thinking about what he did to me. He hurt me. He put me somewhere I didn't want to be. He put me in a dub house and left me in there for a long time and then went with a little girl who was 11 years old and he's 18. He didn't have to do me like that. Some things he did I will never forget what he did and what he put me through.

-Shy Girl

From The Beat: We are not sure what happened but this sounds very serious. We suggest that you should talk to someone you trust about this.

Can't Forgive

Learning from the past is a good topic because a lot of people learn from the past but most people make the same mistakes.

Being locked up I learned a lot about my past. It made me think about picking better friends, because when it all came down to it, they were not there for me in the end. I forgive my ex-homie for what he did, but I will not forget and I won't let it happen again because he is no longer a friend. He is just a person I know and forgave.

-Jerry

From The Beat: It hurts when a friend lets you down. Forgiveness can be hard and will take time. When picking new friends, what qualities will you look for?

Late In The Night

As I was sitting in my room late last night, I was thinking about mi familia. I can't believe I let them down.

Yesterday when my jefita came to visit me, she told me that my little brother is missing me. But pretty soon I'll be out there with them.

I'm going to finish my education, set my goals and try to lay low from the streets.

I miss my family, my homies, and the ladies. But I thank God for everyday that He gives me, also the Virgin Mary for blessing me.

So to all you out there, keep your head up. Stay up! Until next time Beat...

- Traviesso

From The Beat: Being away from your family or support network can be extremely painful and difficult to bear. But you bring a good point, that the pain of separation is mutual between yourself and your loved ones, so everyone suffers. We really hope you get out soon!

On My Mind

I'm busting this rhyme.

I'm serving time,
'cause I committed a crime.

When I'm on the streets, I shine,
and my money is on my mind,
with my hand on my nine.

Some females are fine, and some are kind,
so that's all I gotta say, that's on my mind.

- Muniz

From The Beat: Sounds like you've got some good talent. Keep writing and expressing yourself.

One Life To Live

Life is not a game when you're on the streets.

It's really competitive you can't be beat.

Being in the gang ain't no joke.

And I gots to get the money

'Cause I can't stay broke.

So beware 'cause you might be smoked.

But life to me gots to be serious

I ran into God and I got so curious.

Life is a race, like in the Fast and the Furious.

So now I'm gonna put this straight to an end,

I hope this never creeps up again.

-Hustla

From The Beat: Your rhymes are deep and your message comes across. The hustle of gang life can be intense, and finding that spiritual outlet can help you better understand what you want for yourself in life. Also, writing helps you express yourself and your creativity, so keep it up. In this fast and furious world, these are things that can help you stay sane.

Bad Friends

Giving up a way of life is probably one of the hardest things to do. I know this is true because I've been trying for the past two years.

The hardest thing for me and probably many others is giving up negative friends. I think it's hardest because they're constantly hittin' you up about the things you're trying to stay away from. Now because I kept messing up, I'm in this crap again. And I'm gonna be here for crap.

My girlfriend and I will be celebrating our one-year anniversary, which I'm going to miss. I'm also going to miss Christmas, her birthday, and New Years. I hate this crap, but when I get out I'm really going to try and stay out this time. I love my girl Erika forever. I'm sorry babe.

-Alex

From The Beat: We commend you for realizing what you need to do to make that change in your life. It's not an easy change to make because they're your friends, and they'll keep calling you. Our advice for when you get out is that you should keep yourself, maybe find a job or focus on your schoolwork—that way you won't have much time on your hands to just hang around. Obviously these things are easier said than done, but anything is possible if you really put your mind and heart into it.

What Should I Do?

Sitting in my bedroom late last night, thinking how I'm going to change my life out of this gang life.

It's also hard to know that you got someone you love but...baby knows that he's not there. Now how am I going to live up to this empty world without the one that could change my future? Now that he's not here to lead me to a better future, what should I do?

-Michael

From The Beat: It hurts to be lonely, or to make someone else feel lonely because of your actions. But don't give up—just know that you CAN make that change for yourself and the person you love. Stay strong, and we hope you get out soon.

In My Hood

In my hood, everyday, we have to get down.

No matter what you are or what you do, you'll end up six feet under the ground 'cause the homies ain't scared to shoot a round. We walk around with ammunition everyday, just getting ready for a mission with the other side. With the homies rag on our face and no look of disgrace. That's just the life we live trying to make a living, trying to get dinero.

-John

From The Beat: It sounds like a crazy life, to always be living on the edge like that. Can you think of other ways to earn money in a safe and legit manner? What can you do work toward that?

This Girl

I would never forgive or never forget the past. I could never regret.

I used to love this girl. I even told her I was going to take her around the world. But one day she played me like a fool. While I was in the street with the homies posting up all cool, she came back to the pad when I was all mad. I saw the look on her face and she started to get sad. She asked me what was going on. I just told her to get away from me.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: Relationships can be frustrating! Forgiving and forgetting what someone has done to you can be painful and take time. Although, can you think about ways this experience has made you a stronger person?

I'm Not Going To Forgive

I had a homie that betrayed me. So let me tell you how. He knew that I was gang banging, smoking, drinking, and a whole lot of other shhh. We went to the same school. One day I was cruising it and saw that homie with the enemy. So the homies in the car told me to beat him up and so I did. Then after that he started banging the other side.

-Panda

From The Beat: What is it that gangs stand up for and against in the first place? It sounds to us like you yourself don't even know. Your homie didn't betray you by hanging out with people from the other side, you betrayed him by beating him up because someone else told you to. And if you keep banging, some day those people will do the same thing to you and then what?

Sitting With My Mom

Sitting with my Mom, I can't sleep. I just keep thinking about my screwed up life and how shhh never changes. Life is a blitz and then you die. I miss my little brother and feel hella bad. Showing him my negative behavior and not paying him any attention is not good, because he may be following me.

-Lil' H

From The Beat: Your role as a big brother is important, but you are no good to him if you don't quit your negative attitude toward yourself. Things can change if you try to change them, so don't wait.

Giving It Up

As days and nights pass, I think about how I want to give it all up, such as gangs, getting caught with people I shouldn't be around, or carrying a gun around town. I want to give it all up because what I do ain't the life for me.

I don't want to get caught by the boys for selling weed or going crazy because I have been drinking. That's all I have to say, so kids, if you think gangs are cool, re-think it and go back to school.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Great advice, Kevin. It sounds like you've been through it all, and you're lucky enough to have survived everything so you can tell your story today. Keep sharing your message with others!

I Wonder Why?

I often wonder why one of my family members died from a gun shot. I wonder why they took his life. But truly I know why, because of guns and gang violence.

It is life, that's how it goes, people die everyday and it doesn't really matter until it's your family, or your gang. That's when you do something.

Having a gun is really easy to get and easy to use, it's alright. I don't really care. To me when people die it's like trash getting thrown out. But when it is family or gang it matters because gang is also your family too. You may not agree but it is true.

Gangs got your back; they protect you and get money just like your real family. People use weapons to take other people out or for protection. Another thought is to take that person out before he takes you out of the game. Life is hard even with a gun but you will do anything to keep you and your family alive.

-Cal

From The Beat: We are in disagreement with many of your thoughts concerning the value of human lives and families. Why can't we all get along and embrace our differences? Many innocent lives such as one of your family members have died because of rival gang violence. This cycle of violence is an unworthy cause in which no one wins.

On The Track

Every time I am with a girl, I always have to put her on the track, it is a need-be situation. Especially when she comes back with money that makes her a team player and might even turn her into an all star.

-Chris

From The Beat: Convincing someone else to give away their dignity and self respect so that you can earn money without having to work for it is the most disrespectful and selfish act we have heard. Quit being weak and take responsibility for your own life! Stop using others as tools to help get what you refuse to earn for yourself!

Guns Are No Fun

Many children under the age of 18 have been killed over guns. Many people think it's fun to play with a gun but all it will do is get you murder. Life with a gun is hard and cruel. You use a gun and you run until you're out of fuel. So kids, don't use guns.

-Kevin

From The Beat: You're right Kevin, guns can bring a great deal of danger to everyone, kids and adults. Thanks for encouraging people to practice safety when it comes to guns.

Living Life To The Fullest

Let me tell you about living life as a gang banger. It is not worth it. But when you are still in it, you can not get out. So what the heck, live life to the fullest then.

-Lil' Panic

From The Beat: We don't think that the whole 'can't beat them, then join them' philosophy is good at all. That's like saying; if we can't stop people from killing each other then let's go kill ourselves. It takes strong people to stand up and say the gun fights aren't worth loosing lives. We hope you can be that strong.

I Give Up

I give up on my gang life because that's not the life I want to live.

I want to get my life together and being in a gang can get you killed like that and I want to live my life. I want to graduate and go to college.

The gang wasn't good for me because I was out there shooting at people and banging on folks.

Now look where I'm at, locked up for something I didn't do and now they're trying to give me time.

I give my love to all who are doing time.

'Til pen meets paper again...

-Maurice

From The Beat: It sounds like you've learned from your experience, and it sounds like you want to do better for yourself. We're proud of you for taking that first step, which is to acknowledge and accept that you need to get your life together, by getting an education and not being in a gang. Good luck to you Maurice, and keep writing to let us know how it goes.

Trying My Best

You get real anxious when you're waiting to go to court. But when you find out what you got, it's either real bad or not that bad.

Sometimes you wonder if you want to change your life. As for me, I would just try to do my best at learning the things I didn't.

-Lil' Grin

From The Beat: Keep challenging yourself to learn new things that will help you improve your life. Don't give up!

All Or Nothing

Sometimes I wish I could go back and change some mistakes I've made in the past. It sometimes angers me that I can't and I keep messing up because of that. I'm an all or nothing type of person. I wish I never would have chose the road I have, but I did, and there's no turning back. Like I said, "all or nothing."

-Chucky G

From The Beat: It's never too late to change. All it takes is that first step, and before you know it, you'll look back and see how much has changed. If you could take action to change your life, what would be your first step?

Life in JJC — The Good And The Bad

This time I'm in here it's kind of boring, not like the last time, it was fun. It's boring now but I got to get used to it 'cause I'm going to be in here for a while.

Last time, it wasn't boring 'cause the staff were cool, but the staff this time...well some of them act wrong. A good staff will hook it up with incentives, like soda and Pizza Pockets, but the jerky kind of staff take your points and demote you for no reason.

-Andrew

From The Beat: Sorry to hear the staff this time around haven't been as cool. Sometimes they act that way cause they're probably having a bad day. Other times it might just be stress. But stay positive, don't let the staff get to you.



Feeling Bad

When I was sitting in my room late last night, I was anxious and depressed. When I heard about other peoples' cases, I would feel bad for myself and bad for what they are going through (especially when it's going to be Christmas/New Years). Right now, some people will have to go to court next year. I feel bad for what other people are going through.

-Jose

From The Beat: You've got a kind, generous, noble heart. It's not often we find young people like you in JJC, or even on the outs. Thanks for being supportive of other people's situation—it inspires us!

I Was Thinking To Myself

I thought to myself "I really messed up bad this time." Then I asked myself what I could do to stay out of the JJC. I really want to get out and spend my birthday with my parents. Do you ever wish that you could go back and do something different?

Hopefully I can get out and get a fresh start. I messed up, but now I have a chance to change my life. But I don't know if I can stop what I have already started. Maybe I might just slow my shhh down, but hopefully I can get a fresh start.

-Wolf

From The Beat: It sounds like you will need to find adults that you can trust to stop whatever it is that you are doing. If you really want to change you need to admit to others that there is a problem so they can help you.

True Love

My true love is easy to find.

My true love is always mine.

I get my true love from selling dubs and dimes.

For getting my true love, now I have to do time.

Now I know that my true love is some bad crime.

I know my true love seems funny,

But Yeah, my true love is always Money.

-Mack Neezy

From The Beat: In order for love to be true, it has to be reciprocal, meaning that you gain more from it then you loose. It doesn't sound like you have true love then. It sounds like the illegal stuff you have to do to get your money isn't worth the hassle.

To Forgive

They say that God will forgive you for anything you do. I think even if you kill someone He will forgive you. So I should learn to forgive, even if I don't want to forgive anyone, because I feel I should forgive so I won't forget about them.

-Edward

From The Beat: It sounds like you've been thinking about forgiving someone for what that person has done to you. Or perhaps the opposite, maybe you're hoping someone will forgive you for something you've done?

Dunking Bullets

My thoughts on gun violence are that too any people have them in Fresno. In this town, it's all about having the best bullets, dunking, and surviving. So to all my haters, you better dunk!

-Temper

From The Beat: Too many guns can lead to deadly consequences for everyone, especially innocent bystanders who get stuck in the crossfire. We value your thoughts and opinions here at The Beat, but we don't appreciate when writers make threats to their enemies. That's not what we're about. We hope you take time to think about how you can improve your life so it doesn't have to come down to dunking.

Can't Wait

Sitting in my bedroom last night... I was thinking of my family for a good minute. Then I thought about my girl, but I stopped because it all kills me, to be away from them. But I am chilling now because I'll be out on Christmas, so now I am just doing my program and then getting out!

-Rj

From The Beat: We hope you do better out there Rj. Remember how you felt in the Hall before you make those choices that will bring you back here.

Make Your Way

I try to find ways to make my own way. I pray to God that everything will be okay, but its life! So we are stuck with all the bull and hate and if you are feeling me lift your dang head up and put a smile on your face.

-Alan

From The Beat: God can only help us out so much, a lot of change that needs to happen has to come from you, not the man above. Life is what you make of it, not just what you were given. Remember that as you hold your head up and smile.

Half Hour

I am trying to go home on a furlough. They took it away because on my last furlough I came back late. Now I am mad as heck at the staff and my PO because he doesn't want to let me get an early release date. I will be out next month anyway so whatever.

-Je

From The Beat: Life is full of disappointments. We wonder which ones you are causing for yourself, and which ones you can't control. The staff at the Hall just wants you to do your best so trust them more.

This Place

This isn't the place to be during the holidays. I suggest don't get into any trouble and don't be stupid like me.

-Aaron

From The Beat: Great advice. We know your message will reach others, and we hope you get out soon.



What It Means

When people say "Those who cannot remember the past, are condemned to repeat it" it means that if you do not pay attention to what is happening, you may do it again.

Like from school, in the back of your head you know something that Mr. so and so said, and remembering it will help you so that you will not repeat history.

-Princess Mekal

From The Beat: Thanks for giving us your thoughts on this quote. People in the Hall often choose to ignore their past and pretend it is not behind them, and as you have explained, that could be pretty bad.

Mind Games

It's hard sitting in a cell when you're stressed out and thinking about possibilities. Most of the time it's your own mind making you think and stress. You assume too much. You're playing games with yourself, convincing your self of the good thoughts running through your mind. But the ones you don't want to think of always win the battle when it comes to convincing.

All my thoughts of my stress go away when I convince myself that there's a plan for me and I will be guided along that road whether it means if I get what I want or not--either way things are going to be ok. Maybe better I try to convince myself that if I thought things were good when there was problems that things would be great if things start all over or start a whole new chapter.

-Remy

From The Beat: This is a good description of how hard it can be to keep our minds on a positive track. It's true that if you can stay positive, you may be able to take your life from good to great, even start all over if you need to.

MURMUR

Guess who? MURMUR! duh I can't wait to be free. I can't wait to have every thing back. Every thing I had once upon a time before probation.

No trouble for me naah I want my life back. I want to spend my free life with the girl I love and my physical loves too. I want to live by my beliefs and stay away from trouble with the law.

I just have to stay on the dl that's kind of hard fro me because I'm a punk and I stick out a lot. But if I control myself I guess I can stay cool. It's always my actions that get me caught up with the law.

I'm so stupid sometimes I don't think before I act. That's what gets me caught. I guess I just have to practice doing all these things so I can have what I want most. My life back and my loved ones and things.

-Murmur

From The Beat: Now you are very clear about what you risk losing if you don't think about your actions. Practicing new ways of reacting is a good idea. Prepare yourself for the times that will challenge you. It's your life, don't give it away by not thinking!

Why?

What would it take for me to change. To be honest why? I love what I do. People talk about how they want to change when they get out. But for real how many people really do it?

Being lock up don't bother me. Would I want to be in prison? No but there is a 50-50 chance that I will get caught when I'm running in the streets. Why do I gang bang? I gang bang to show how much pride I got. I will die for my hood.

Growing up didn't have no family but the boys. Why would I leave them like that? They wouldn't do that to me. The only way probably make me want to change is that all my rivals will be gone. Until then I'm just going to do what I have to. I do what I do for my future lil' boys or my sons- so there aint much would want me to change.

-Stunky

From The Beat: If you have a little boy he'd need you to show him how to work hard, even when it seems impossible. He'd need you to play with him, keep him healthy, help him learn about the world and how to grow and become the best person he can be. If you didn't have a family growing up, can you understand how your own son would need you to be a father for him.

Crime Pays

I just wanna be rich if every body had some money I guarantee crime would be low. They say you can't get wealthy off of crime, you might not get rich but you will have some money in your pockets.

Crime pays but if you get caught ya butt is grass if you follow the yellow brick road and go down the right road you might be come rich after 30 40 years. By the time you some way down the road somebody on the other side of the law is gonna rob you I rather be the robber than the one getting' robbed after all my hard work.

-Lorenzo

From The Beat: You may or may not get rich from crime or legit work. Many people don't need to be rich, they'd like a good place to live, food, good things for their kids, and a job they feel good about devoting much of their lives to. Few are rich, and many of the rest of us still have full, rich, meaningful lives.

Missing Out

What's up Beat? Me just chilling in this day care. I aint really feeling today's topic so I'm going to write about the outs.

I hella miss the outs kicking it with the friends and the females-man I can't wait to get out with my brother and the friends at the pad cause if I drink it in the hood police gone get there and arrest us and I aint tryna come back for no drinking in public u feels?

But yup Beat I hella miss the outs, it's all good do I'll be out sooner or later out there getting it myself another whip slap some 2's and some beat boy I cant wait to get out.

-Hustla Claus

From The Beat: We think it's wise to think about drinking carefully as so many get caught up with charges somehow related to drugs and alcohol. If you value your freedom, and life so much, make good plans that will keep you free.

The Beat Family

Two brothers growing up not prey to the streets but predators to enemies that don't belong in our streets. I grew up seeing and experiencing things that my mind at the time was clouded to. Not knowing that in a few years things are a way of life.

Can't change to fit in to the streets you were born into a family that teaches you about the guide lines of it. Me born and raised by a solid family adding family to increase numbers will only become better. My brother he know what's up he was part of the family before his boots were laced up. He might of thought he knew but now he knows the things he thought he knew weren't shhh at all. Now after years of running around hogging it up with Vacaville fam we went through a lot always keeping our head up doing things without hesitation with no limits.

Our whole family lives the same life we do. When I say the whole family I mean moms dads cousins friends the whole enchilada no joke. It's hard because everyone knows when family has children whether they're a boy or girl, its always said that the next generation to the streets. My tattoos in the family are known as birth marks because its said its true born into our family and more than likely you will get the birth mark your family said you would ever since you were born. Its crazy how things work but that's the way of life.

Much love to all the family. I love her to death. Loyalty above all loss.

-Remy

From The Beat: From what we read from a lot of Beat contributors the "loss" you write of can become too much to bear. The destruction of a family that you love, through death, prison, alcohol and drugs, and sorrow is very hard to witness and be a part of. You can change your way of life any time, and if you do maybe some of your family will too... and maybe that will help all of you with your lives.

Give It All Up

I won't, why give it all up when things get hard so what if you gotta do time. Time aint nothing to a beast we get through it ya feel me. My homie just got seven years CYA time but he still in here beastin though. He a straight beast on everything.

I've been locked up for 2 months and I got six months to go. When I get out I'ma just get smarter about my stuff. But that's it for right now I'll holla at ya later.

-E.

From The Beat: Sometimes we think that this street stuff and doing time is an excuse for never seeing what you could make of yourself and your life legitimately. You're right, if you don't value your freedom or have goals and motivation to live life what difference does it make to do time? Life is hard and unpredictable. Love is risky. When you get locked up you know when they're going to open, and close your door.

Getting Kick Out Of School

What's up with the Beat this is Baby Drifter from Fairfield. I don't go to school because I got kick out from the school district that shhh was fun but at the same time I was mad because my mom would get mad at me when I get home.

So I said dang dawg I'ma get in trouble but I said heck with it, I did it there is nothing I could do. Thanks to my mom I'ma go back to school and this time I'ma change I'ma listen to the teachers and my mom that's it I got to say. Thanks for paying attention to me I'm gone.

-Baby Drifter

From The Beat: You're lucky your mom is in your corner fighting for you and your life. School is important and it will help you always if you finish. Don't give up! Work hard, you can do it.

Sitting In This Cage Last Night

Every night I go to sleep go to sleep. Keep waking up feeling weak my memory. It aint nothing won't last cause I gotta week. And I'm gone up out how I'm pose to be. Right!

And I aint rapping just writing see. Putting down on paper so you feel me. Or who care cause I'm leaving this facility. Staying out and do the same if you smartly. Now I'm gone lil' Nite see me in the streets. Stay up yo time coming...

-Lil Nite

From The Beat: We wish you well out there. Take your time! Make good choices, think about the long term vision...it's your life! Good luck.

Betrayal

A while back this dude called Tampon came and turned everyone out to that yada, one of my friends told "Muffin" girl that he was into it without knowing she knew what she was.

So Tampon and Muffin started driving by calling my friend a snitch after a while they came up to his house starting problems-his parents came out and Tampon tried fighting his mom and "Muffin" was sitting there backing up Tampon after his friend and his parents done so much for him.

Then a couple of months later "Muffin" hopped out of Tampon's car on me, pushed me and hopped back in that's betrayal. Whether he did something or not its betrayal to me.

-Ace

From The Beat: There's much about this story that we don't really get, however we do understand you felt betrayed. Do you plan to forgive these characters? What good does it do you if you don't? How would it feel if you could forgive them, let it go, and just get on with your life?

Posted

Me I always stay posted on my block everyday and night people come through with all type of drugs trying to sell stuff in my hood, but my monsters come and sweep the whole area.

Up getting all the goodies from the enemies you dig. I love my hood that's why I post on it all day. These weak people always saying they getting active but they just talking out the side of the trap. They don't even know where the trap is.

-Lil T

From The Beat: What do you love so much about your hood that you dedicate yourself to it this way? What if you couldn't go back there, what would you do then? What else could you do with your life?

Untitled

What's good Beat it's yo boy coming once again from Vacaville. Well I aint got much to say. But I got three months left, you feel me.

I can't wait to touchdown, I've been locked down for a minute. But you know that life that I live I'm bound to do time. Well anyways Beat that's all I got to say get at me.

-Young Goofy

From The Beat: Your time is winding down and you're soon going to be faced with some decisions. Which way will you go when you consider those moments of choice that are coming? We don't think doing time is an acceptable expectation for anyone. Don't give up.

Stop Trying

What's up with it Beat it's ya boy J-Naz, but you know I just got kicked out of Fouts for doing what I do, but I was up there trying to change for the better but they wanna kick me out for some stupid shhh.

Man so I'ma just say heck with it and give up trying to change for the better, I'ma just be me and do what I do (all my real ninjas know how I get down!) what's the point because when I get out I'ma forget everything I learned anyways and just go back to do what I'm good at, straight house licks and getting snowed in, cause right now I'm most likely going to get out with no probation the judge might terminate me unsuccessfully cause I'm 18.

And to everyone that's trying to change stop trying cause when you get out you're just going to go back to your old ways like nothing ever happen so stop trying to fool yourself by thinking you're going to change and just face reality and say heck with it cause you only live once.

And to all in New Foundations, Fouts, and county keep y'all heads up cause we gone all be out soon doing it big.

-J-Naz

From The Beat: Sorry about your trouble in Fouts, but you can't give up on yourself now! You've already put in a bunch of time, and learned things about yourself that you can't forget. Unless you love jail you can't "just go back to do what you're good at," and you know that. It's hard to change, especially when surrounded by folks that aren't supporting you making that change. Don't give up. Work hard, you can do it, and it does matter.

My Girl

My girl stay by my side we like the next Bonnie and Clyde she ain't never been shy and she more than a dime she stay on my mind I'm locked up she out make me wanna cry but I gotta stay strong and I gotta stay fly.

-Young Rell

From The Beat: We hope your story has a better ending for your sakes.

18 And Down/Back Again

What's up? So I'm back again I was in New Foundations just three months ago. I did six months and now I'm back well not really for a crime, just curfews but they had me in here for about three weeks.

I missed Thanksgiving and my 18th birthday in here this time I missed a lot of holidays over ten and I've only been locked up twice man but I'm not gone mess up. Because the next time I get locked up I'm going to county. Well I can't wait to get my freedom.

When I get out I'm going to adult school and getting a job. I'm going back to Rancho when I get out that's my hood in Vallejo I'm going there because that's where I feel safe. I just wanted to give a shout out to all my friend God bless you all my family too.

-Twun-Twun

From The Beat: Good luck out there, like you say don't get caught up again. We think adult school and getting a job could be more fun than you think. Have faith in yourself and work hard.

Crazy Thoughts

Vacaville is where it's at. What it do Beat, another day, another day. They got me chilling in juvie with these youngsters like its nothing. But its whatever. I can't wait till I touchdown. I'm 18 years old fina be 19 and I'm tired of being tired. I need to dig into something asap.

My money looking right but I can't touch it until my release date. Fresh cortezez, belt, Pete Rose throw back, some black dickies and a hair cut and I'll be back on the block blending in like a chameleon. Straight up in cognito just how I like it.

-Droopy

From The Beat: If you couldn't return to that what would you do? do you ever wonder what you maybe could make with your life, your talents, abilities and energy?

Untitled

Posted on the bunk late last night. Can't wait to get out. Be back with the home boys like the good all days. My enemies want me dead. Want to see me in my early grave. Ain't show'n no remorse. Aint like no one would show me none they will take my life like that.

Protecting my mom with all will. Cross my line got show you the bizz. Keep on trying. Preparing for the days when I get got be on my tees cant let 5.0 catch me slipping. Got one chance before I get wash. You know what I do. If I could start over I wouldn't change nothing my life is going good to all the home boys lock up from juvenile to the pin keep it solid.

-Stunky

From The Beat: How can you say you are protecting your mom with all will when you are determined to live this life? That hurts her, and it sounds like she needs you alive, free, and making good decisions.

I'm Patiently Waiting

I've been patiently waiting to go to this group home, didn't know what I had till it was all gone, I had friends on my side, but I had it all wrong, now I'm sitting alone singing this damn song. I've been patiently walking the talk for so long, the talk for so long, I'm getting tired of this shhh, I've been doing it all wrong.

-Lil J

From The Beat: Good luck in the group home! Day by day, little by little practice a new way of living that feels right.

Wednesday Rotation

What's up Beat. Let's see I turned eighteen last Sunday and I'm still in here I got 2 months left of doing the same thing. I wonder what's for dinner today hopefully something good. The place is all Christmasy and I'm still kinda gloomy, but as long as I get out on my weekends it's all good. And hopefully stay away from trouble.

-Ali

From The Beat: How do you deal with things when you're gloomy? Do you read or write, or daydream? What makes you feel energized and fully of life?

So Confused But Yet Not

Take a wild guess! Look around who are you? Plain and simple right? So you think! So you know who really knows? I don't do you? Gangster? Prep? Rocker? What's the difference? Is there a difference? Cant tell! Can you? Clothing? Music? Style? What is that? Can you tell me? Blue? Green? Red? What am I asking for? Do you know? Not simple! Isn't so plan to understand? Who are you really? Don't categorize, realize! Win! Don't lose! Blame! Don't be ashamed! Stand for some thing--be you!

-Lil Skittles

From The Beat: We like your questions. What do you find worth standing for in your life? What defines who someone is?

My Life

What's up with it Beat, me I'm chilling right now I'm just tryna get up out of here, I been holding it down I'm from that city of Vallejo where it all get down, me and my boy D. finna get out of this joint, and we back to the hood.

It's a struggle out there, one of my real ninja just got shot, it's ugly right now, but it aint shhh I'ma keep it lit for all my ninjas out there, I'ma be home soon.

-Millie

From The Beat: We're sorry about your friend. We've heard about a lot of people getting shot lately and we hope you stay safe and sane. It's time to do something different!

I Aint Changing

I aint trying change. I like the life I live but if I could change some thing I would make my family rich. I gone get out and do what I do. I'm not going to change for nobody. I'm a mobster.

I have to do what ever to get mine even if I gotta take it. If I go to the pen then oh well. I rather be judge by twelve than carried by six. I keep it real. I like hanging out with my cuddies I like getting money I live a thug life.

-Young Cutt

From The Beat: If you go to the pen, oh well? Come on, expect more for your life than that! You're worth more than a life in prison. You're family probably needs you alive and free more than money. You have to believe in yourself, you can figure out your life!

Realize what They're Doing is a Mistake

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. I think that means people who make the same mistakes are bound to continue making the same mistakes over if they don't realize or think what they're doing is a mistake.

-Nso Rob

From The Beat: We agree. And what about you in your life? Is there anything you've realized about your past that you now think was a mistake?

Mi Promeza

Yo nunca voy a volver a venir a la juvenile porque hice una promesa de no volver a esta clase de situación.

Pierdes tu libertad por algo que no vale la pena. Prefiero quedarme con las ganas y no volver a hacer estupideces que me van a hacer daño en mi futuro. Prefiero estar afuera y estar libre como un pajarito sin que nadie me tenga que decir nada.

Si ya cometi un gran error, nunca jamás volveré a hacer ninguna estupidez que se me venga a la cabeza.

Primero voy a pensar dos veces antes de hacer algo. Es todo lo que tengo que decir.

From The Beat: Nos parece muy bien que pienses así. Vas por el buen camino. Esperamos que cumplas con tu promesa y que esta sea la única vez en este lugar.

My Promise

I've never going to come back to juvenile hall because I made the promise of never getting into a situation like this one.

Here, you lose your freedom over something that isn't worth it. I prefer to stay with the desires of doing something and never commit the same stupid things I did that will hurt my future. I prefer to stay out and be free like a bird without having someone who can tell me anything.

If I already made a big mistake, I'll never commit another stupid thing that gets in my head. I'm going to think twice before doing something. That's all I have to say.

-Enivan, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: It sounds good to us to think like this. You're on the right path. We hope you keep your promise and make this the last time in this place.

Las Armas No Son Buenas

Las armas de juego no son buenas, no cargues un arma para sentirte más hombre que otro, y no las uses para hacer daño a otras personas. No te das cuenta que cuando haces daño a una persona haces sufrir a sus familiares. Por ejemplo--como tu madre y a tus padres.

Tocate la consciencia antes de hacer actos de esos. Yo escribo esto para pedirte que porfavor que pienses antes de hacer un acto malo. Puedes perder tu libertad y hasta tu vida. Si tienes un arma, tócate el corazón y no le causes dolor a otras personas.

From The Beat: Estamos seguro que si todos pensáramos de la forma como tu piensas, evitaríamos tantas pérdidas, sangre derramada y mucho sufrimientos de gente inocentes. Esperamos que aprendan de este consejo. Tú mantente lejos de ellos y se otro fuera de la lista.

Weapons Aren't Good

Fire weapons aren't good. Don't carry one to feel manly than others, and don't use it to harm other people. Don't you know that when you hurt someone, you are also hurting his/her family—your mother and father for instance.

Touch your heart before committing some of those actions. I write this to ask you to think before doing something bad. You can lose your freedom and even your life. If you have a weapon, touch your heart and don't hurt other people.

-Gunfree, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're sure that if we all thought the way you do, we would avoid so many losses, blood spill, and suffering from innocent people. We hope someone learn from this advice. You keep yourself away from those and become another one off the list.

Los Pensamientos De Dos

Sentado en mi cuarto ayer

Estaba pensando de antier

Cuando se me vino el pensamiento de amor

Pensaba de todos los sentimientos y de todo el dolor

Todas las veces que me hicistes sufrir

Y me hicistes reir

Cuando caminábamos te agarraba las manos

Pasando por las calles

No nomas contigo pero también

Con otras viejas

Una por una para que no se dieran cuenta

Siempre las llevaba para tomar unas cervezas

Despues de eso, ya saben lo que pasa

Si te queria pero no te distes cuenta

Te estoy diciendo que te estoy mandando al Diablo.

From The Beat: ¿Huy, que fue lo que realmente estas muchacha les han para portarse bien rudas con ellas? Parece que el quien se porto mal andando con una y otra fueron ustedes. "Lo que sube, tiene que bajar."

Thoughts Of Two

Sitting in my room yesterday

I was thinking about a day before yesterday

When the thought of love came to my head

I was thinking of all the feelings and all the pain

And all the times you made me suffer

And when you made me smile

When we would hold our hands and take walks

Walking through the streets

But not just you, but with other girls

One by one, so they won't find out

I would always take them to drink some beer

After that you know what would happen

I did love you, but you didn't know it

Now I am saying that I'm sending you to hell.

-Pacho, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What have girls done to you to be so rude to them? It seems like you were the ones who didn't behaved well by being with one and the other one. "What goes around, comes around."

Dios Me Dijo

Venía entre la oscuridad, entre las villas del tren, miro una sombra que se me acercaba y me doy cuenta que son pajaritos queriendome atacar. Yo me espanto y me pregunto, ¿que hago?" Me dice que es el demonio y me da risa porque no sabía ni quien era. Me doy la vuelta. Dios me habla y me dice, "no te preocupes mi hijo. Soy Dios y yo te estoy cuidando. Gracias a mi Dios.

From The Beat: ¡Que momento tan temeroso! Esperamos que también la voz de Dios te guie hacia un mejor camino. Gracias por contarnos. ¿Fue esto un sueño?

God Told Me

I was coming through darkness, between the train's rails, and I saw a shadow that was approaching me and I realized there were birds that wanted to attack me. I get scared and I ask my self, "what do I do?" It tells me they are the demon and I laugh because it didn't even know who it was. I turn around. God talks to me and tells me, "Don't worry my son. I am God and I am watching over you." Thank God.

-None, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: What a scary moment! We hope the voice of your God guide you to a better road. Thanks for sharing. Was this a dream?

Esta Navidad Sin Mi Hermano

Que odnas Beat? Es este Pelón, ya se la saben. Aqui en la torcida. Pues hoy voy a hablar sobre mi vida. He pasado por un chingo de cosas.

Aqui me ven hoy vivo y feliz de tener una hermosa familia que siempre está conmigo para lo que sea especialmente mi jefita. La quiero un chingo y es la única persona que me conoce como nadie en esta vida loca que llebo.

Mi jefita se aguita que yo esté aqui en la torcida y mas porque sus dos hijos estan aqui.

Pues mi carnalito está en el Rancho y es el más morrito de los dos, pero el torció más pronto que yo. Eso me aguita porque pensaba que iba a torcer primero, pero la cosas pasan. Ya mero salgo de aqui. Espero estar en la cantona para el la Navidad y estar con mi familia. Esta va a ser la primera Navidad sin mi carnalito y vamos a extrañarlo un chingo. Lo bueno es que está bien y para la siguiente. Es todo por hoy.

From The Beat: Esperamos que esta vez hayas aprendido tu lección y cambies por ti. Tienes un hermanito que esta muy malguido, y la razón pueda que sea tu mal ejemplo que le has dado. Tú puedes ayudarlos si realmente quisieras. Pero para poder ayudarlo, primero tienes que dar el buen ejemplo y enseñarle el camino hacia un Nuevo camino. Si quieres la próxima Navidad pasarla con la familia junta, tienes que ayudarlo. ¿Crees que puedas?

This Christmas Without My Brother

What's up Beat? This is Pelón, and you know it. Here I am in jail. Well, today I am going to write about my life. I've been through so many things.

Here I am alive and happy to have a nice family who is always there for me for everything, especially my mother. I love her so much and she is the only person who knows me more than anyone else in this crazy life I'm living. My mother gets sad to have me in jail—especially now that she has both of her sons in here.

My lil' brother is in the Ranch and he is the youngest of both of us. He got locked up before I did, but thing just happen. I'm almost out from here. I hope to be at home for Christmas and be with my family. This will be my first Christmas without my little brother and we are going to miss him a lot. The good thing is that he is fine and so later. This is all I got for today.

-Pelón, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We hope you learn from your lesson this time and start changing for your own good. You have a little brother who is misguided, and the reason might be due to your bad example. You can help him if you really want to, but in order to help him, you have to set a good example, and show him the way to a better road. If you want next Christmas to spend it together help him. Can you?

Nunca Volvere

Yo nunca voy a venir a la juvenile. Prefiero quedarme con mi hijo a quien quiero mucho. Nunca lo tuve a mi papa. Por eso me voy a portar bien. Yo quiero estar con el ahorita. Lo aprecio mucho.

From The Beat: Eso nos parece mayor. Tu hijo va a necesitar a un padre como tu lo necesitabas o lo necesitas. Te deseamos suerte, padre.

I'll Never Come Back

I'll never come back to juvenile hall. I prefer to stay with my son who I love so much. I never had my father and that's why I'm going to behave well. I want to be with him now. I appreciate him so much.

-Anónimo, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: That sounds better. Your son will need a father like you needed one or need one. We wish you good luck, daddy.

Para las Camaradas

Esto va para los camaradas del barrio. Si piensas que por tener una pistola en tus manos eres chingon, pues no es así. Tú cargas pistola por que tienes miedo o por que tienes algo en tu conciencia. Quizás es que la cargas por protección pero no seas pendejo, no mas dispaes por que quieres. Demuéstrales que tienes huevos. Solo porque te crees chignon no sabes si vas a lastimar a una persona inocente que este alrededor. Por eso les recomiendo que si disparen a lo pendejo, les deseo suerte.

From The Beat: Nos gusta como piensas. Es verdad que han matado a muchos inocentes cuando tartan de matar a otros. Ojala que tú no te encuentras en esa situación. Ese tipo de vida es peligrosa y no paga nada bueno. Realmente, ese modo de vivir, con orgullo y violencia, es basura. Esperamos que hagas decisiones correctas y con inteligencia.

To My Friends

If you think that by having a gun in your hands you are tight, you're wrong. You carry a gun because you are scared of because you got something heavy in your conscience. Maybe you carry it for protection, but don't be stupid, and don't just shoot because you want to. Show them that you got guts. Just because you think you're sick, you'll never know if you're going to hit an innocent person around you. That's why I recommend you that if you are going to shoot like a stupid, you should have a good luck.

-Conejo, Land Of Enchantment New Mexico

From The Beat: We like the way you think. It's true. Many innocent people have died over people who try to shot others. We hope you to never be in that situation. That type of life is very dangerous and doesn't award anything good. This type of life, and that type of pride is just garbage. We hope you make the right and smart decisions.

Mi Verano Se Terminó

Se me acabo el fin del verano. Que hermoso fue este verano. Me la pase super bien. Me la pase de parranda con mi familia, a tirar party, pero regrese a la desperdiciar mi tiempo. Llegue y me meti en problemas. Me pelié con unos vatos que no respetaban a mis primas. Los puese en su lugar y pense salirme con la mía y no me salió como quise porque llego la policia y me arrestaron.

Ahora estoy pagando caro pero ya que. Así se fueron mis vacaciones de verano. Ahora estoy en Felton Juvenile hall. Al rato Beat.

From The Beat: Debistes haber cuidado tu verano. Ahora tienes que pagar por tus actos you. Esperamos que aprendas que la violencia nunca va a solucionar ningún tipo de problemas.

My Summer Ended

My summer ended. This was a wonderful summer. It was very fun. I spent it partying with my family, throwing parties, but I came back to wasting my time. I came and got into trouble. I fought some guys who were disrespecting my female cousins. I put them back to where they belong, and I thought I was going to end up doing it my way, but didn't turn out as I wanted because the police came and arrested me.

Now I am paying a costly price and that's the way my summer vacation ended. Now I am in Felton Juvenile Hall.

-Ivan, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You should have taken good care of your summer. Now you have to pay for your actions like you said. What's the lesson of this experience? We hope you learn that violence doesn't bring solutions to any type of problems.

Perdóname Mama

No te quise lastimar
No sabía la realidad de toda la humanidad
Encerrado entendi
Todo lo que te hice sufrir
A su lado quiero estar
Con mi jefita querida
Para demostrarte que soy el hijo que usted quería.
Cuando me dieron un año de estar encerrado
Yo me puse a pensar porque usted no va a estar a mi lado
Ya viene Navidad
Y yo no voy a estar
Todo por andar
De busca pleito en la ciudad
Me reprocho todo el daño que le he hecho
Pero la verdad es que yo si me arrepiento
Días tras días
Noches tras noches
Siempre me pongo a pensar
Que son puros reproches
Dedicado a Angelica. A.

From The Beat: Esperamos que ella reciba este mensaje, porque por lo menos ella se merece estas palabras. Creemos que ya te has dado cuenta el daño que le has hecho y creemos que ya es tiempo que ya pares de hacerla sufrir. Ella se merece más que eso. ¿No lo crees?

Forgive Me Mother

I didn't want to hurt you
I didn't know the reality if humanity
Locked up I understood
All you suffered over me
By your side I want to be
With my dear mother
To show you that I am the son you wanted
When they gave me a year in jail
I started to think-why you're not going to be by my side
Christmas is coming
And I'm not going to be there
And all for
Looking for fights in the city
I reproach myself for all the pain I caused you
But the truth is that I regret it
Day by day
Night by night
I always think
That there are so many grudges
Dedicated to Angelica

-Jose

From The Beat: We hope she gets this message because at least she deserves these words. We believe that you have realized all the pain you've caused her and we think it's time for you to stop making her suffer. She deserves better. Don't you think so?

Esa Voz Que Me Hablo

El sueño más grande de mi vida era alcanzar el cielo. Pensaba en matarme. A lo lejos, alguien me hablaba en voz baja y me dijo, "Mira hijo, tú no mereces estar en el cielo." En eso yo sentí muchas cosas hermosas. Me dije, "fue Dios quien me habló. Yo no me merezco eso."

Necesito cambiar de vida y salir adelante, ser alguien en la vida, tener futuro, tener una casa a mi gusto. Gracias a Dios se me cumplió ese deseo.

From The Beat: Esa voz que te salvo la vida, te quiso dar a entender que tienes una vida por delante por la cual vivir, que tienes un propósito en la vida y que tu hora no es ahorita. Ojala y llegues a cumplir lo que quieres y que esas voces siempre te ayuden en tu camino y en las decisiones que vayas a hacer.

That Voice That Spoke To Me

The biggest dream of my life was to reach the heaven. I thought about killing myself. From a far away, someone talked to me in a low tone, and said, "Look son, you don't deserve to be in heaven." After that, I felt so many beautiful things. I said to myself, "it was God who spoke to me. I don't deserve that"

I need to change my life and move on in life, be someone in life, have a future, and have a house. Thank God that wish came true.

-Crelone, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: That voice that saved your life wants you to realize that you have a life ahead of you to live, that there is a purpose for you in this life, and that your time is not now. We hope you get to gain what you want that those voices help you along the way and the decisions you will make.

Fue Arrestado

Hace una semana me arrestaron. Fui arrestado por robar una casa y todo fue por no haber estado en mis cinco sentidos.

No me puedo arrepentir porque lo hecho. Algo si les puedo decir es que me siento mal por las personas que trabajan y les quitamos sus cosas. No nos quitamos el corazón para decir, "que pobrecitos todo lo que trabajan." Eso es lo que se me ha quedado en la cabeza. Todo esto fue por el mendigo alcohol. Digan no a la cervezas y se los digo por experiencias.

From The Beat: Nos gusta la forma como has reflexionando con tus errores. Ya estas aprendiendo muchas cosas importantes de la vida—cosas que se les toma mucho tiempo a muchos por aprender. No te detengas. Ahora enfocate con tu problema del alcohol y busca una salida.

I Was Arrested

I was arrested a week ago. It was over robbing a house and I did it when I wasn't with my five senses.

I can't regret for what I've done. Something I can tell you is that I feel bad for the people who work really hard to get their things and we take them away from them. We don't touch our hearts to say, "poor people, they work really hard." That's what has been stuck in my head. Everything happened over damn alcohol. Say no to beers and I say this through experiences.

-Erik, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We like the way you are reflecting on your mistakes. You are learning very important things in life—things that take a very long time to others to learn. Don't stop. Now you need to focus more on your alcohol problem and look for a way out.

*Everything happened
over damn alcohol. Say no
to beers and I say this
through experiences.*

Encouragement

To all the young brothers and sisters, also to the elders who are incarcerated in prison, and in the juvenile homes and youth halls who write for The Beat Within workshop, I want to send some words of encouragement.

To my brother Shawn Montgomery aka Cat Eyes, Chris from Tampa, Florida. Chris, you are such a great writer. And what ever you do, don't ever stop writing because you have a gift of writing. And I liked that piece of writing above my own writing. And I liked that piece of writing you dropped in The Beat called "How To Love A Black Man" and "Gossip". Keep up the good work.

And I want to send some encouragement to a brother called Mikhail Markhasev. Keep writing on because I don't know how to stop thanking you for all the wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and insight I have gained from your writing. Thanks again.

Our next writer has been consistent writer for our publication week in and week out. Even if he doesn't see his pieces published right away he refuses to stop writing. Sending us his writing from Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida, Michael writes everyone a few words of encouragement. Doesn't matter what facility you're in, whether it be juvenile hall, or group home, or whatever penitentiary you find yourself in, we can all use a few words of encouragement to help us get through the day.

A Time To love, Not To Hate

It's a time to love not to hate

A time to love and a time to appreciate

Life was giving to us out the love of God's heart

And that was true love from the start

And the world I live in is full of hate

Pushing the ones who love into losing the faith

Love is what needed in every direction

Love that god gave us is for human protection

In prison inmates who have hate in they heart think the word love is a game

They think love is no such thing

Love is real

Love is what we need to feel

Love is our true nature, not hate.

If I Had Two Wings

And they say the only bird that cant fly, is a jailbird

And I have been a jailbird for too many years

The last 20 years, I have been a jailbird

And if I had wings I could do so many things

I could fly away out of this cage

I could fly away from all this prison rage

Then for my life I could set a new stage

And leave this prison life behind me in so many ways

If I had wings I could not be held in this tiny cage that fills me with rage

That's holding me unto I see old age

If I had wings, I would spread them as wide as I can

I would flap them as fast as I can like a fan

And I would fly away from this prison place like superman

And I would deal myself a brand new hand

So I would give myself a chance

To get myself out of the sand

And if I had wings to fly through day

I would never stop thinking the lord for blessing me in a special way.

Being Alone

For a great number of years I thought I was alone, a stranger to the world because I was feeling alone. But as I grew older and wiser I have come to learn that I am not alone. That was just my thoughts and feelings had me thinking that way. And just understanding the bible helped me know I am not alone. Isaiah 58:8 say then shalt, thou call, and the lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am.

But even when I don't call him, I know God is on my side. And little did I know there were many people in the free world who always kept me in their thoughts and concerns. And when I did have the chance to hear from them through letters they would let me know I will never be forgotten, and that I will never be alone.

And Michael Jackson made a song that I took a liking to. "You are not alone." So in this world I have come to learn that no one is alone. God is on all of our side. And everybody has somebody in their life. It may not always seem like that when we are feeling alone.

"Realistically"

Gangbanging is self-explanatory

Trying to re-animate actors

You can't return your receipt

After you've become a real estate number

Be reasonable with this aspect

And recognize my name

Contrite

Yep, I've been lost before

Ganging banging was my excuse

To, run, hide, and be frivolous

Humbled by grace

It's here for all, not just me

That's realistically

CONTRITE

We love welcoming back our next writer. It's not that he has stopped writing, but that we have failed to publish anything from him for a while. So our deepest apologies go out to you Contrite who writes to us from a Correctional Facility in San Bernardino, Ca. Contrite brings some appetizing poems for everyone to devour!

"You Got Frost Bite"

Trying to thaw out

From those frosty frowning dudes

But sometimes, you still feel frozen

Tempted to disown that coldness

A cold shoulder

But, too conceited to see the vanity

Frost Bite Hurts.

Ice

Cold as the concrete that hold me inside these walls
 I slipped and fell while banging on ice, now heaven calls
 Halls and jails, prisons and such
 Right in range but just out of touch
 Cool me down
 I miss you so much that I just can't take
 Another day without your ice
 I might just break
 I might just break.

Guns Bust

To all reppin' The Beat
 Seek freedom and you will find freedom
 Become elite
 Your soul can eat this food for thought
 Think-think-remember what the streets taught
 When you run hard, them streets get hot
 They burning jails institutions - death - you learning?
 Keep making the same mistakes: rock, crystal, blow
 The pen's calling you home -Yo
 So what - your young world on fire, sporting red, blue
 There's only one person that needs to care - you
 Put it all together two and two - do the math
 Strive for success - don't stray from the path
 Wrath will come and go - push, pull - strive
 You're old enough to hold the keys - then drive
 Stayin' alive's a struggle - they took pop's breath
 I know you can relate to drugs - death
 Listen when I say this crank star's life is criminal
 My aka Jumpy - I'm sending you messages - subliminal
 I'm hoping to get through - hoping you have an ear to hear
 my rhyme
 Days, months, years - the clock ticks - but all you got's -
 one time
 One shot at life - do with it what you must
 Eye for an eye, black-black trade back, when them guns
 bust.

Dear Beat, Lil' Bros And Sistas

I'm coming at you again to feed the soul with food for
 thought. Hope you like my little rhymes. Hope you can
 relate and hope that they will hit home on some of your
 struggling topics. I was once you, a troubled youth,
 smacked back - in the scene -sex and slugs, I mean drugs
 - my rocks they roll. Ha-ha.

Anyway just wanted to say high and let you know that
 Jump's cares enough to write. There is only one person in
 this world that cares about you. That's you. So do what's
 right for you. Love your life. Tomorrow's not a given. Be
 strong and I'll do the same!

Your big brother,

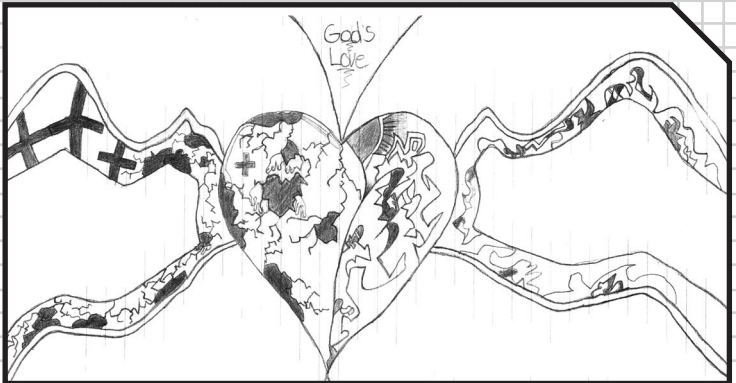
Play Boy

I use to play in the streets, criminals and thugs
 Play on playboy, watch out for hot slugs
 My enemy's crawl on me like bugs, I can't shake'em off
 Filthy from doing dirt I don't sneeze, don't cough
 Break mines off girl, first and foremost
 Where I come from? Nor Cal, West Coast
 Lil' homies wait to set trip look past the hate
 Get in where you fit in, or get out the Golden State.

Our next writer who also goes by the name Jumps, is writing to
 us from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. Our friend Charlie
 has been around the pages of our publication for a while now, and is
 highly motivated on trying to reach out to the readership. You can say
 Charlie Schwarm has been there and done it. He has been sitting in the
 same seat many of you are sitting except, in Charlie's times, there was
 no Beat or voices telling him to steer away from the path that he was
 leading. Instead, he learned it the hard way. And now he has made it
 a personal mission to reach out to those that are in the same situation
 that he was once in.

Free Me

Open up and spit me out
 This isn't what life's all about
 Captive in the belly of the beast
 Shackled and chained, spirit free at least
 Though the devil's feast on my soul
 Thrown into a deep dark hole
 The hole to crossover is much too high
 If I don't continue this fight for freedom my seed will die
 The hurt doesn't show, but why?
 Why does it feel like the truth is one big lie?
 Dear mama may I cleanse away your pain?
 A storm of emotions that washes away insane
 My misery is being in your company, surrounded
 Tear drops from laying 'em down in their death bed
 Eye for an eye looking deep into the blind
 But I cannot see from all the smoke from the kind
 Brainwashed mind the world spins around me
 Hypnotized
 What do I see
 Me
 Me
 Free!



Fire

Your young world on fire, days and more days
 Locked up missing the moonbeams and sun rays
 Purple haze clogs your mind, lust, desire
 Voices invades your thoughts, fire
 Before you expire, what do you want to do?
 Make someone proud, how about you?
 Play with fire you're going to get burned
 This goes out to whom may be concerned
 I learned my lesson a little too late
 Now there's nothing more to debate
 So participate don't let life pass you bye
 Because when life becomes dull; you'll ask why
 Why me? Never free, caught up in the fire, I'm burned
 29 to life, still I'm concerned
 I see me in each one of your eyes
 And when you fail part of me dies!

Pain Hurts

Could you see it?
I guess not, but we do know
It hurts a lot
Could you feel it?
I guess so
The pain I feel only god knows
Like a cut to the heart, bleeding inside
Could you see it now?
It's in my eyes, please tell me why!
It's not my way
So you say, the games I play
For only love, no more pain hurts inside, who I blame
Please tell me why that's all I ask, could this be another task?
Maybe a dream, for what it seems I've washed my hands
Now there clean!
I'll fade away to another place
I'll see you again another day
Pain hurts.

Another Night

The sun has just set, my eye's won't close
Darkness in this cell, for only God knows
Body steady pasting, my mind still at froze
Disrupted heartbeat, as the wind blows
Silence in the night, my body begs for sleep
Against the odds of death, I pray the lord to keep
Changed, but not broken, for my feet fail for weep
My soul is still deleted, my spirits moan and weep
Another day has passed, the night has just begun
The night rushes too soon, shortly comes the sun
I'm less without a dream
A wish I pray to see a harmless human of fear
The gates are almost free
Just another night, my pain reveals so true
The clouds is moving over, and the sky is surely blue
"Another Night."

Who Do We Call

Through all situations,
we call on God
No matter what were facing,
we call on God
Even when it's easy,
we call on God
Mostly when it's hard,
we call on God
Through sickness of health,
we call on God
When it's our last breath,
we call on God
When there is nothing left
we call on God
When "we" deal with a death,
we call on God
When we're playing, on our knees,
just me and God
The first thing I say
is I thank
God
Forever shall we call on God!

Our next writer is writing to us from Charlotte Correctional Institution in Punta Gorda, Florida. Lil' Grill lost touch with us for a minute but now is back and ready to consistently drop some poetry for our publication. Full of knowledge and feelings to get off his chest, Lil' Grill doesn't hold anything back for you readers as he openly expresses all the emotions and thoughts that are running within him. Read on!

My Life

My life was written, or was it forbidden?
The path I've taken, still lost and hidden
I've tried to learn, but taught to earn
Once was told, we'll all get a turn
Return to the streets, this is all I know
All my life, the struggle before
Tested and tried, through the gates of hell
Fast life living, my whole plan fell
Trapped in chains, 'till death I lay
I'm on my knees, for my precious prey
Could it be heard?
The whisper of sounds
my life is written
I can't give up now
My life.



I'm Back

I once was gone, but now I'm back
My minds was off, now I'm back on track
These poems I write, please take heed
All I ask, is to publish and read
Please forgive me, for being so lost
If it's a price, tell me what's the cost
I promise to never, cut no slack
Guess what The beat?
I'm baaaack!

Invictus - William Ernest Henry

Out of the night that covers me
Black as the pit from pole to pole
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced, nor cried aloud
Under the bludgeoning of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me, unafraid

It matters not how strait the gate
How charged with punishments the scroll
I am the master of my fate
I am the captain of my soul.

In the many years of The Beat's existence, there has never been a time when we were not blessed with truly extraordinary writers. Israel Perez — Easy — is such a writer. But, as anyone who reads this well-crafted piece will see, he is gifted in other ways as well, particularly with his fists. He wonders if (in the words of Marlon Brando in "On The Waterfront") "I might have been a contender" in professional boxing, if only he had been given some basic guidance. That leads us to wonder what else he might have accomplished for himself and for the world if that guidance, that so many of us take for granted, had been there for him. He knows his skills as a fighter (and a writer), but what of his intellectual potential? He might have been a great musician, mathematician, physician, politician or any number of other contributing citizens, had anyone cared to provide the structure and guidance he needed when young. The tragedy is not just his, alone, but is reflected in every unit The Beat visits — a reservoir of potential, of what might have been. Israel, who writes us from Pleasant Valley State Prison, follows his own piece with a very famous poem by William Ernest Henry, called "Invictus" which he urges every young Beat writer to read and to take to heart.

*Beyond this place of wrath
and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade*

Of Something Else

There are some men and women who move upon the face of the earth, yet they are unlike their fellow man. For these men and women are made from a substance of something else. They are cut from a cloth most special, separating them from the average. And though they derive from parts both far and wide, nevertheless, they are kindred spirits joined together by an unconquerable soul.

With many of these gifted individuals, they, and those around them, know from the onset there's something special about them. For they- to everyone's amazement- get up and take that first step, long before they were even expected to crawl. They point and utter words, during a time they should only babble out a slobbery gurgle. They add and subtract, multiply and divide from their high chairs, while soggy Cocoa Puffs precariously cling to the top of their heads. By age five, they are fluttering their tiny fingers over the ivory keys of a Steinway, having mastered Beethoven. And at age twelve, they are making their way across the prestigious campuses of Stanford, Harvard, Cambridge or Yale.

However, with most of these special men and women, they don't stumble into their gifts until later in life. But when they do, they are like a slow grumbling churning that builds into an avalanche until they spill onto the world stage where then they point to the moon, then propel man up into the Heavens of outer space. They build great walls and save their citizens from pillaging barbaric armies. Or they hammer them down and release a flood of freedom. These charismatic alpha-type human beings have the ability to take everyday words- no matter the language- and arrange and link them, so they are able to deliver powerful speeches... speeches which raise the fine hair at the back on one's neck, and send chills rippling over the skins of their audience. These words have the power to free men of their shackles, a people of their yokes, and unbind a gender from its suffocation. Delivered properly, these speeches can rile up an entire nation to a point of fervor. They are willing to gloriously charge rows of flesh-mangling machine gun fire. Or, they can simply bring silence to a continent that has been roaring with artillery blasts for year upon year. But even more remarkable about these great beings is when they come upon their own destruction, their own deaths. They do not crumble to the floor begging for continued life. No, these men and women hold their heads high as they are swept off to the dark oblivion of the assassin's bullet, the gallows, the

burning stake, the sword, and whatever other ways the average man can think up death.

Now, of course not all of these gifted people are allowed to reach their full potential. After all, when seeds are spread on lands far and wide, some seeds fall to rest on the unfertile ground. And even worse are the ones who take root among life-choking weeds. For these gifted children, life is a confused dream, often drifting into nightmare where they go stumbling through their bleak worlds, occasionally catching fleeting glimpses of their true potential. And rarely is there anyone who recognizes the signs, nor guides them toward their destiny. Thus, there are no piano lessons for these young. No science fair projects, debate teams, Ivy League colleges, political successes, or Nobel prizes. Instead these special young discover their frustrated potential delivering them into places of incarceration.

They find their natural charisma attracting the attention of their neighborhood gangs. And once in the gangs, they experience an unknown drive to climb upwards toward control. And for the ones who don't meet an anti-climatic violent death, they graduate to the world of adult prison. And in that violence-rich environment, there are countless up-side-down goals for them to master. In prison, these gifted men and women inevitably become small-time legends in a small-time world. They are the ones who the average prisoner follows, hero worshipers. They are the ones whose feats and actions are told over loud chow hall tables, or in quiet two-men cells. And while their counterparts are busy becoming pillars of man's universe, these imprisoned giants are but small flashes of light in a very dim prison world.

Part Two

It's been about twenty-six-years since I suffered my one and only defeat in hand-to-hand combat. But I can still recall the cold wet weed my opponent shoved my face into. I was all of eight years old at the time, and at that moment I had been more afraid of a spider bite- or any creepy crawly insects sting- than I was of any pain my adversary could deal me. And although I walked away defeated on that eventful day, it wasn't because I couldn't fight. As a matter of fact, I was a vicious little brawler while growing up, and was known for going straight for my opponent's nose. After all, for kids, whoever are bleeding more profusely at the end of the fight, is hands down the loser.

While walking home from the creek where the fight took place, my buddies surrounded me attempting to soothe my

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wounded pride. They continuously pointed out how Joey- the boy I fought- was not only three years older than me, but he also outweighed me by thirty pounds and towered over me by nearly a foot. Yet none of these facts mattered to me because I'd still have to see Joey every day since we were nextdoor neighbors. And furthermore, the dispute, which led to the fight, was still an open wound. Only now salt had been rubbed into it.

The dispute was over dogs. Like any other family in that East Side San Jose neighborhood, my family had a dog. His name was Boozer and he was a big dog with a heavy white shaggy coat. But Boozer was not only our dog. He was the neighborhood's dog. And I can't recall him ever being chained up or having a leash for that matter. Boozer was the sort who couldn't resist joining (disrupting) the play of the neighborhood kids. If it was football or baseball in the street, then we could count on Boozer to run off with the ball between plays. If it was basketball in the driveway, then we spent a good amount of time wiping off the dog's slobber in the grass. In the end, we probably got more exercise chasing down Boozer than from the games themselves.

But sadly, not everyone loved Boozer- or was at least willing to accept his playful nature- For Boozer had an enemy who loathed him with a passion. And that enemy was Joey's vicious black and white pit bull. And boy, would he go berserk at the sound of Boozer's happy yelps and barks. Then, when the pit bull had snarled and barked himself hoarse, he would seethingly watch Boozer play through the thin slivers of his abused wooden fence.

Boozer himself never seemed to pay him any mind. But us kids on the other hand, we always subconsciously listened for the tell-tale sound of the heavy reddish-brown chain which metalically scraped along the ground as it staked the dog to his territory. And it was this heavy chain that the pit bull was mysteriously loose from one warm afternoon day. It allowed the vicious dog to wiggle his way beneath the fence to freedom, to Boozer. Nobody saw the initial attack, it happened so fast, but the sound of it was more than enough to cause all of the neighborhood kids to turn around. What we saw when we did was the pit bull's jaws locked firmly onto Boozer's throat. Of course we all yelled and screamed at the pit bull to let go, but we knew the dog was too mean for that. So all we could do was cry as a crimson bloody stain began to soak Boozer's white fur.

Never did I quite get over the loss of that happy dog Boozer. Just as I never forgot the defeat to Joey. Both defeats were meals I didn't like the taste of one single bit. So I made sure that as the years began to come and go, so did my victories. That is, until my childhood fighting came to a climatic end in the eighth grade.

It was in the eighth grade when I discovered myself attending Sylvandale Jr. High, a school that was ripe with racial turbulence. Prior to my enrollment, I had already heard rumors about the school's notorious reputation for fights. It was the only middle school in San Jose that was surrounded by a high prison-type barbed wire fence along with two plain clothes providing security.

My first day of school was stressful and confusing as any new student I imagine, with cliques, groups, and "in crowds" already well established. But for me there was an added stress. Being a half-breed Asian, I was quickly made aware that I was at the bottom of the pecking order. Even worse, I soon learned that Asian students had suffered humiliating losses to Mexican students, Black students and some White jock types. So by the time I arrived, all the Asians had been pushed off to the least desired hangout spots.

Well, it wasn't long before I popped upon on everyone's radar. I was sitting in hobby class talking to two beautiful Vietnamese girls. And judging by their laughter, giggles, and

blushing, I knew my charm and natural charisma was in fine working order. Yet our fun soon came to an abrupt end when a pretty chunky Mexican guy sought to take the joy out of our flirting play. He began loudly making jokes about Asian people. Being one who never backed down from bully-types, I delivered some of my own verbal daggers on his pride.

With a tinge of regret, I made my way toward the restrooms where we had agreed to fight. I was being escorted by about four or five Vietnamese and Filipino students and they couldn't stop educating me on how the boy I agreed to fight was the toughest Mexican in the school. And by the way, twenty-five or so of his friends surrounded the Oakland Raider clad boy ahead of me. I guessed they were right.

Entering the now crowded restroom, my big opponent stood in the middle of the semi-circle his friends had created. His Raider cap and jacket were already off, but I had no problem picking him out. He was looking at me with a half-smile, half-sneer on his face, as if he had already chalked me up as his latest victim. And at that moment I knew I had him beat. I knew his over-confidence had allowed him to underestimate me, while the warning I received told me that I needed to be extra vicious. So, not wishing to give my adversary time to reassess the situation, I took three quick fluid strides toward him and delivered a four-punch combination. My no-nonsense assault caught him completely off guard. The solid hits sent him stumbling into the crowd behind him, spewing blood from his nose and mouth. The fight was over.

Stunned, everyone looked repeatedly at me, then to my former opponent, who blindly searched for a sink. I could tell they had been expecting us to play out a ritual most fights begin with where the two combatants stand in front of each other, their faces only inches apart as they begin to breathe hard, then slowly circle one another pumping themselves up for violence. But I never felt a need to pump myself up. For me, I always did much better in any form of confrontation with a cool head.

The news of our fight spread through the school like wildfire. To my delight, I learned by the lunch period I was immediately one of the "in crowd" with my social clique. However, the fight, also had a negative effect. It resulted in numerous boys seeking me out to fight. So much so that by the end of the month I had bested all the "fighters" of my school. Until the day came when there wasn't a fight hungry crowd gathered at the back of the school. I didn't realize how much stress I had been under.

Becoming the hero of my social crowd was a wonderful feeling. It got so that everywhere I went, my peers followed. I became like a sun in our school universe with smaller planets orbiting. If I thought a new style of clothes was cool, then all the guys began to wear it. If I declared it lame, then everyone discarded it and hounded those who didn't until they did likewise. The music I listened to, all the guys went and bought. The way I cut my hair had them all rushing to the barber. And with the females, my new status had its benefits as well. Because the ones I couldn't charm with my looks and charisma, now seemed to be drawn to my leader of the pack position.

It seemed life couldn't get any better for the young teenager that I was. So when a couple boys from other schools began showing up just to fight me, I welcomed it. After all, it was fighting that won my much enjoyed status. Then I noticed a couple older brothers showing up outside my school. And when I sent them home as hurt and humiliated as their younger brothers. I wasn't so surprised when students from Andrew Hill High School began showing up. Then Y.B. High, Silver Creek High and Oak Grove High School. Now there weren't groups of middle schools students waiting for a fight, but carloads of high school kids.

But when the first twenty year old showed up and had to be

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talked out of wearing brass knuckles, I knew things were going too far. In the end, I found myself bringing a .22 Cal pistol to school because I soon learned that nineteen and twenty-year olds don't like getting bloodied by freshly turned fifteen year olds. And it was the gun that gave me my first case and started me on my journey through "the system".

Entering California's empire of "correctional" facilities was quite the same as entering my old Jr. High School. There are already the well-established groups and in-crowds- gangs- and there's always racial tension just beneath the surface. Only in CYA and adult prison, the violence is taken to another level and there are no girls, real ones anyway, to try to impress.

Of course, my fighting abilities served me very well in all the institutions I was eventually to journey through. So much so that to this day my record's only loss was to an eleven-year old Joey. However, things have changed for the prison system I once knew. It seems CDC (California Department of Corrections) has been forced to place an R (Rehabilitation) at the end of its title. Thus, the violent behavior it once encouraged is now frowned upon.

I learned that most recently after a young cocky prisoner refused to heed my warnings to leave me in peace. And with a simple three-punch combination he found himself on his back. Then, to my utter surprise, the CO's didn't give me the usual smiling nod of understanding or jokingly rehash the fight. Instead, they began conducting themselves very officially, searching for any key evidence, looking for any statement which could be used in a trial. The message was clear. They

sought to reign in the system's violent nature. The very one it helped create.

But the worst of this unfortunate incident is I've been given notice that if I ever wish to see society again, I will refrain from using my hands in a conflict. Because of my history, I'm expected to ball up into a fetal position during a physical altercation - unless my adversary has a weapon. But maybe this is what I needed to get me back to the world I love. Maybe this threat of a life sentence is the "U-turn" sign I've needed all these years.

Staring down at my hands now, I wonder at what might have been. I wonder what life I would have had if someone had directed me to a legitimate ring. I ball up my fists now and imagine raising them as a gold belt is fastened around my waist. I am left pondering to myself as I'm surrounded by gray concrete walls, stainless steel and rusting iron, if I could have been someone. If I could have been one of the greats. And a fleeting glimpse from the corner of my eye tells me that I could have. That I should have. But I, Israel Perez, was just unfortunate enough to have taken root amongst life choking weeds.

This piece is dedicated to all the youngsters in Juvenile Hall and CYA. Don't allow yourselves to get trapped in prison's very dim world, only to realize that your truly gifted.

And to God above, though I failed to realize my full potential, nevertheless, I thank you for creating me with material of something else.

ISMA'IL RAHMAN

Conditions In Texas

I'm excited that I could share with you some on how the down economy is affecting those of us in prison. I think from inside these walls, there are a ton of things we can share with the outside world that they would rarely gather without our input.

It's true; things are very bad here because of the economy. The parole decline is due to the strict requirements demanded by the Texas Parole Board. If you have no solid address to parole to, your chances of being granted parole in Texas is slim to none. A solid address (residence) to parole to is more important than having a good disciplinary record. The parole board has field officers who visit these addresses in person to ensure they meet a certain standard. They conduct an extensive background check on all the occupants of a residence and ensure that this is a suitable environment for a parolee.

No Texas prisoners are allowed to parole to homeless shelters. There are 10 to 15 state-run halfway houses for people who lack a residence to parole to, but the waiting list is 3 to 5 years to be approved. The recent housing crisis, where many people are being foreclosed on, is causing many potential parolees to be denied for lack of an approved residence. Most people (inmates) make arrangements with family members, friends, etc. to use their address to be paroled to.

In regard to your question about being paid a small rate in Texas prison for work, Texas prisoners are not paid one cent for their labor. One would think this would violate the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution, but Texas gets around this by awarding good time credits for work. Years and years ago these good time credits would award a prisoner early release, but that's not the case today; the legislators enacted a law about 15 years ago that

Our next writer is sending us this valuable piece of information from Michael's Unit in Tennessee Colony, Texas. The economy downturn is hard as it is on us working folks and we can only imagine how harder it gets for the people in prison. Isma'il states that Texas prisoners don't even get a penny an hour for working in Texas. Hygiene is hard to come by so you can only imagine how the food situation looks. Writing us a real article on a very important issue Isma'il educates us on some facts that you might not have ever known about!

excluded people convicted of certain crimes from early release. The list of crimes is extensive. So while Texas still awards everyone time credits for work, these credits are meaningless. So the inmates who have no one on the outside who can assist them in obtaining their necessities have to do odd jobs so that they can obtain it from another inmate.

So inmates wash clothes, some draw, others do some less than honorable acts. You would be shocked to hear what some men would do to get toothpaste and deodorant. At Christmas every year, some churches come in and give everyone one toothpaste, deodorant, and shampoo. That lasts perhaps one month; the rest of the year you are left to fend for yourself.

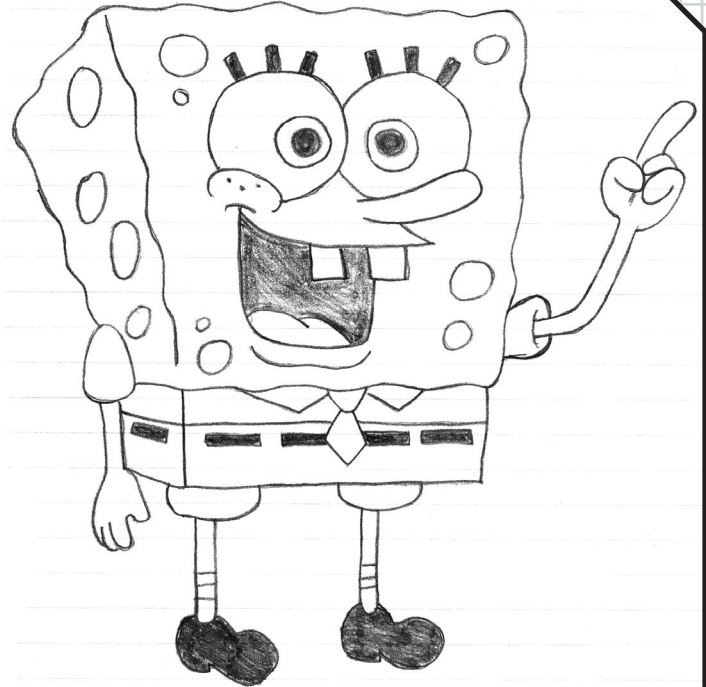
Texas prisons are at least 20 years behind every other prison in the nation. No matter how clean your disciplinary record is, you are not permitted contact visitation with anyone but your immediate family members. If a person has no immediate family, you never receive any contact visits.

That's one of the main reasons I decided to form F.I.R.S.T. Most people in free society don't know what transpires in these prisons on a daily basis and most prisoners don't know that they deserve better, that if they work, they should be paid something other than time credits that are worthless. If we can educate people on both sides of the fence, I really think we can do some good.

Wasted Time

The time that I've wasted is my biggest regret
 Spent in these places I will never forget
 Just sitting and thinking about the things that I've done
 The crying, the laughing, the hurt and the fun
 Now it's just me and my hard-driven guilt
 Behind a wall of emptiness I allowed to be built
 I'm trapped in my body, just wanting to run
 Back to my youth, its laughter and fun
 But the chase is over and there's no place to hide
 Everything is gone, including my pride
 With reality suddenly right in my face
 I'm alone and stuck in this place
 Now memories of the past flash through my head
 And the pain is obvious by the tears that I shed
 I've asked myself why and where I went wrong
 I guess I was weak when I should have been strong
 Living for the money and the wing I had grown
 My feelings were lost, afraid to be shown
 As I look at my past it's so easy to see
 The fear that I had, afraid to be me
 I'd pretend to be rugged, so fast and so cool
 When actually lost like a blinded old fool
 I'm getting too old for the tiresome game
 Of acting real hard, with no sense of shame
 It's time that I change and get on with my life
 Fulfilling my dreams for a family and wife
 What my future will hold I really don't know
 But the years that I've wasted are starting to show
 I just live for the day when I'll get a new start
 And the dreams I still hold deep in my heart
 I hope I can make it, I at least have to try
 Because I'm heading toward death and I don't want to DIE!

Our next writer should be a very familiar name if you've been reading the latest issues of *The Beat Within* the last couple of years. Shawn has been a consistent writer, writing all sorts of pieces, from articles, to advice, and some real brilliant poems. In his upcoming piece "We Reap What We Must Sow," Shawn brings up a couple valid points as he speaks about his past failures and hopes for a better future filled with peace. That's just the beginning of it, his next piece talks about some grown man game as he spits some real knowledge. Just 'cause you're 21, that doesn't mean that you're a man. And he's right! Writing to us from Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida, you won't be disappointed by Shawn's latest effort!



We Reap What We Must Sow

I turn from where I started to see to where I must go
 "What goes around comes around" they say
 We reap what we must sow, it's what we come to know
 I'd like my path to be paved with joy, so now I've learned to smile
 And I'm not the best at showing love, but I hug every once in awhile.
 Yet there's always that ever, doubtful dread
 Where failure peeks its head
 Letting me know
 "I come and I go, you reap what you sow."
 I'm not sure when I can repay my past, it's a long and broken road
 Or just what price of fear and vice for the truth I now extol
 To succumb becomes my constant choice
 I adopt to extend my hope a hoist
 And whether the crowd objects with its adverse jeers and jests
 I'll await the rejoice of that still, small voice
 My conscious guide and inner sun
 To whisper to me, "Job well done, old friend, job well done..."
 Moments within moments, hurts trapped in hurts
 Sometimes tears on bended knees are all I've found that work
 In this destination where desire dreams
 My midnight madness of "what if" means
 In all I see I seek to find
 Some sense of peace to be called mine.

What Does It Mean to Say You're Grown?

The mistake today's young people make is they think once they've turned 18 or 21 it means they're grown. What's missing is what being grown means. That's the part they have no interest in. Being grown means you're mature, understand what responsibility means, and are capable of making rational decisions without the use of violence. It also means you have a level of self-esteem that can never be challenged. Being grown means you put your children before yourself and are willing to make sacrifices for them.

So, what does being grown mean? Does it mean you can legally buy cigarettes and alcohol? Does it mean you can talk to older adults with no respect or regard for their wisdom? Does it mean you can now go to the club? Or have you been going already?

To all young people walking around saying they are grown, I'm telling you, you're wrong. If you have to walk around telling people you're grown, that means you're not acting the part.

Take care when you walk around with your chest stuck out trying to make people respect you because you are 21 or older. Being grown comes with quite a package, and that package includes knowing when to shut up and when to speak. It comes with the knowledge of respecting those who came before you and seeking them out for advice.

The Game of Politics

Everywhere you go, everywhere you look it's a game of politics, everyone trying to get over top. When you really look at it it's a cutting committee, sort of like crabs in a bucket, I gain if you drop. It's no such thing as friends in this game. I scratch your back you scratch mine and if you were to make it don't forget the chain in which you came. To have power is to have fame. They don't tax the rich the poor is always the ones to blame. People will smile and laugh in your face as if they were your friends but its really just tactic to secure their status. Hoping you don't smell the b.s. in their breaths that they had for breakfast. When it really comes down to it 95% of this game is fake. It's all an illusion and all one really cares about is a healthy dinner plate. Look at what you earn and look at what they make. Now how the hell is we're going to live in harmony when they were collecting crumbs from their cake. That's why in the streets it's either give or take. Some will consider me an outlaw but it's not my fault I was raised that way.

No matter how hard you try to succeed in the world there would be those who notice it and they will try to stunt your growth. For they are like snakes in the water plotting on you and your family, looking to kill you both. It is much safer to float in a boat, but if you're floating too high, you better hope the sign don't say "U.S. coke." I don't understand how. I'm being blamed for some material I had but it wasn't mine. I guess it's all a game of politics and the judge and D.A will discuss my fate over a glass of red wine.

I have come to understand that in this world I'm really on my own. And no this isn't another sad song. This is something I will know even after my blood exit my bones. For each his own, no ones ever wrong until they're caught. And that's when you'll see the hypocrites start to chop (backstab) with the birds in which they flock. Most of them is working with the cops. And the rest has been elected as star witnesses sitting in the county jail across America known as the "busta blocks." You show me one person who goes straight by the book. And I'll prove to you even he/she's a crook. And if you think I'm lying you've been blind too long. You forgot to look. In the heart of debates the law was told. But when all tempers cease to flair what they

Our next writer, E-Money, we wouldn't like to welcome back to the pages of our publication because he was out here enjoying his freedom with us not too long ago. E-Money use to work here at The Beat-part time, writing pieces, and trying to get his book together. However for reasons he only truly knows, E-Money got caught up in a struggle out here in the free world, and now is writing from San Quentin State Prison, although the following piece was written from San Francisco's county jail in San Bruno, CA. Rich with knowledge, he is motivated to improve his situation. E-Money shares us his thoughts and advice.

came to realize is the world is actually cold.

Everyone breaks the law whether it's a minor or serious. All you have to do is ask George and he'll tell you he's been curious. "Wrong is what a collective says it is. Until it's proven" right by a collective of the kids. Is it that I'm really a criminal? I sometimes wonder.... Or is it that I'm a victim of a collective evil mind frame looking to take me under?

We have entered into a new era ladies and gentlemen, hoping that with a new face and a different race- love will start to replace all this hate. Hoping that those who didn't deserve life in prison will now receive a date. Vote yes on '08. It is there that lies Americas fate. The choice is yours. America don't wait until it's too late. And for those who didn't think so- the youth does matter all you have to do is look at the polls.

You can stop the corruption all you have to do is say "no!" I said "no" that's why I'm currently in the hole. They tried to rob you tax payers by forcing me to go to school, when in college I'm already enrolled. Naw, this is not 850, this is San Bruno, they had me going to court shackled head to toe. I was the most dangerous criminal. I guess you can say where shhh already stinks, bull shhh goes. Together we stand divided we will always fall. To vote is to be a super star. It's not all about basketball.

If you tired of getting denied at job interviews and if your tired of going to sleep on beef stew, you no longer have to rob, all you have to do is vote and you'll receive your butter on your corn on the cob. You no longer have to play a fool or some manipulating scum tool. All you have to do is read behind the lines in school. And you'll see the way the youth has been being treated in America ain't even cool.

Knowledge is power. It is vital to know this game I'm spitting. But it's really not a game. And Adam understood that once that apple was bitten!

No More

I'm so used to failing
So why I'm I scared now?
Anticipating my release date
As I stress in my cell
I can't see the light
I just hope it is there
Because just a little light in the dark
Can lead you to hope's stairs
I grew up a lost boy
Hate and confusion made up my life
And the violence and abuse
Made it a struggle to survive
So now I choose to fight
Because they label me a number
I'm at the bottom of the barrel

MATT

Our next writer was once a contributor in our workshops in Solano County Juvenile Hall in Fairfield, CA. Matt is a very talented writer, and his writings reflect the pain and burdens that he has endured in life. But as we all endure through our own fair share of trials and tribulations full of pain, we can only get stronger. It's up to us to keep that hope alive and better ourselves. As our friend Matt states that he isn't afraid to fail because he wants to take the risk to live. The following piece was written while he was housed in the hall this past summer.

But I refuse to do under
So for the my future
I cease the fire that burned only myself
Stop living this life of lies
And make it with what I'm dealt
It is what it is, you get what you do and did
I ain't scared to fail no more
I'll take the risk to live.

This Mountain

As my mountain should
And every mountain does
This one stood tall, strong, beautiful
The awe-inspiring perfect accent
To the wonderment
That was the rest of the world

Screaming wind, violently striking lightning
Black, silently threatening storm clouds
And carelessly apologetic rainfall
Have each and all fought
To break this mountain into the flat
Overlooked valley landscape
But this mountain never learned to be
Anything other than a mountain
And so never even knew how to give in

Though the weathers had sometimes managed
To chip away at this mountain's surface
Forcing an occasional rock to fall
Or tree to burn
All they ever accomplished
Was the shaping of a new mountain
Even more beautiful now
Against the horizon
For all of its flawless scars
Still tall, still strong, more beautiful

Even the greatest storm could not
Convince this mountain to disappear
Even as the cloud

Inspired by a Beat topic ("Put yourself in someone else's shoes"), the young poet/writer, Michael Cabral, (who puts us older poet/writers to shame by what he is able to convey in words), wrote this remarkable allegory — an extended metaphor in which he puts himself in his own mother's shoes, and transforms her into a towering mountain, suffused with the strength it takes to be a good mother. This tribute to his mother is an inspiring piece of writing, but the true tribute to her is the incredible young man she created, delivered and nurtured, and who continues to grace our pages from his "house" at Salinas Valley State Prison.

Dared this mountain into the darkness
And electric bolts charged into its body
Even as the shrieking wind
Accused this mountain
And the curiously soft rain
Begged to cleanse its surface
This mountain only confusedly
Obliviously, then bravely stood
An unyielding gift to the world

And after the passing of each storm
(And in spite of the happenings
of the greatest storms)
This ever-prevailing, magnificent gift
Determinately allowed the hopeful rays
Of our taken-for granted sun
To shine over and onto its highest peaks
Glorious
Unafraid
Unashamed
For this mountain never learned to be
Anything other than a mountain
And so never even knew
How to be broken.

BRON'SHI JACKSON

To All The Beat Readers

I would like to take this time out to send my love and respect to the whole staff and Beat writers. It's never easy doing time, and with this being my first time getting locked up I want to thank The Beat for being there for me. I see there's a lot of ya'll out there young and old doing super hard time and I've kicked back and read about some of you leaving and then coming right back. So that lets me know how easy it is to come in and out a place like this. They say, never say never, but I'm really trying to make this my last time coming here. God willing, when I leave here it'll be for the last time.

I'm far from a preacher, but I have a little public service announcement to make to all Beat readers. I just want ya'll to know that the time is coming when you have to become your own guru. You don't need others to tell you what the will of God is. You're alive because of the power of God, which is the power of life. So be aware; make a choice. Have the courage to work through your fears and change them so you're no longer afraid to love and live the way you want to live.

Remember, to live a good life takes hard work. The only thing fast money is going to get you is an early grave or years of hard time. We're all human, so it's only natural that we limit our possibilities by our own fears. You are what

Our next writer is sending all the readers and writers out there a message from the heart. It's not a poem, or an article, but just some straight words of advice and encouragement. Sending us his thoughts and prayers from Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA, we would like to thank Bron'Shi for his thoughtful comments and positive advice. He is definitely worth the read folks!

you believe you are. You have the power to make yourself what you are right now! You have the power to change it all around starting today, no matter where you are. Now it's just you and the truth face-to-face without any intermediary.

If you're searching for the truth, look at yourself and you'll find truth within you. And to all the lifers, the only thing left for you is to enjoy your life, to be alive, to heal your emotional body so you can create your life in such a way that you openly share all the love inside you.

And to all my young HOT HEADS and go-getters livin' the fast life, remember this: the whole world can love you, but that love won't make you happy. Only thing going to make you happy is the love and respect you have for yourself because friends leave, letters stop comin', and canteen gets short. Think about it. Thanks and God bless.

Please add this shout out to my little sister Amber doing time at Chowchilla. My aunty, Baby Sister (that's her nickname) also in Chowchilla, and my Baby Girl Rosie in Mader County looking at all day. I love you all.

Remember, to live a good life takes hard work. The only thing fast money is going to get you is an early grave or years of hard time. We're all human, so it's only natural that we limit our possibilities by our own fears. You are what you believe you are. You have the power to make yourself what you are right now! You have the power to change it all around starting today, no matter where you are.

read the rest of Michael Cabral's BWO piece on page 83

